

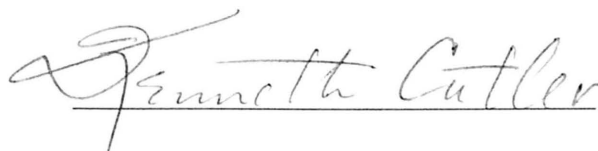
SIR THOMAS ERPINGHAM, K.G. (1357-1428):  
A KNIGHT IN THE SERVICE OF THE HOUSE OF LANCASTER

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Submitted to the faculty of the University Graduate School  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree  
Master of Arts  
in the Department of History,  
Indiana University at Indianapolis

October 1999

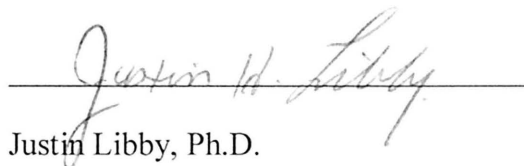
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April 14, 1999



This Master's Thesis is dedicated to all the men and women I have met during my lifetime who have encouraged me to study History. Without their guidance, criticism, and enthusiasm, I never would have fulfilled my dream of studying the past. I wish to express my most sincere gratitude to Professor Kenneth E. Cutler who has spent many hours improving me as a student and as a person:

Elizabeth Babcock  
William Blomquist  
Sheila Cooper  
Anna Dell Dorn  
Grace Dungan  
Ron Finkbinder  
Richard Fredland  
Justin Libby  
Edward Milbourn  
Berthold Riesterer  
Phil Scarpino  
Errol Spears  
David Vanderstel  
James Vane  
John Vane  
John and Helen Vane  
Kandace Vane  
Michael Vane  
Rosalie Vermette  
and  
John K. Stevens

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## Introduction

There is perhaps no more prominent event in the history or national mythology of late-Medieval England than the spectacular English military triumph over the French at Agincourt in Picardy on St. Crispin's Day, October 25, 1415. The young English Lancastrian King Henry V led a force of 5,700 men, of whom almost 5,000 were longbowmen, against an enormous French army of 20,000. It was the archers, under the command of Sir Thomas Erpingham, K.G., (1357-1428), who provided the crucial firepower at Agincourt and secured this substantial English victory.

Agincourt was the culmination of a career during which Sir Thomas Erpingham faithfully served three generations of Lancastrians. Beginning in 1380, with his indenture into the service of John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster, Erpingham campaigned throughout Europe in support of the House of Lancaster. He went with Gaunt to Scotland in 1385 and Spain a year later. Sir Thomas traveled twice to Prussia with Gaunt's son, Henry Bolingbroke, Earl of Derby, to seek glory in the Baltic Sea region in the early 1390s. The most important event in Erpingham's life, however, was his decision to remain loyal to Bolingbroke during the latter's political troubles in the late 1390s. By accompanying Henry upon his banishment to France in 1398, he demonstrated his unqualified loyalty; by returning with him to England to claim the earl's inheritance (and eventually King Richard II's throne) in 1399, Erpingham secured his place as a member of the new king's household.

Sir Thomas Erpingham was a man of relatively modest social origin who rose, in just twenty years, from being a servant to the son of King Edward III to become a powerful and trusted member of the royal inner circle under Kings Henry IV and V.

Erpingham was of such prominence in the careers of Lancastrian lords and kings that no history of the period can be complete without some account of him. According to Elizabeth Armstrong of the Norfolk Heraldry Society, Erpingham still was remembered prominently in Norfolk during the seventeenth century. Even William Shakespeare (1564-1616) deemed it essential to make him a character in his classic historical drama Henry V.

References to the manifold services of Sir Thomas Erpingham are scattered throughout the public records and chronicles of late Medieval England, but to date there is no biography of him.<sup>1</sup> Despite the fine research materials in the United States, it has been very difficult to collect information about Erpingham's life and career. Although this author was fortunate enough to make one trip to England during the past two years, in some cases the materials needed to write a complete biography simply are not available.<sup>2</sup> This paucity of information has made it necessary, in some cases, to write about Erpingham's life through the lives of men in whose company he was at that time. These instances, such as the Duke of Lancaster's invasion of Castile in 1386, require us to speculate about Sir Thomas' actions according to what a typical Medieval English knight would be doing in the same circumstance. It is not until the usurpation of Richard's crown by Henry Bolingbroke (in 1399) that Sir Thomas is mentioned by name in fourteenth-century chronicles.

An essay the size of this one cannot hope to fill this void in our scholarly literature, but will describe the main outlines of his career—the events and issues that any complete biography will have to address. Given all the research and writing about Medieval England, it is somewhat surprising that Erpingham has not been the subject of a

full-scale biography. Sir Thomas' career is an excellent example of how influential connections, when augmented by personal bravery and uninhibited loyalty, can allow one to acquire lands, fame, and power. Perhaps it is because he died without having fathered any children who could have carried on his name, thus limiting the national prominence of the Erpingham name to one generation, that biographers so far have ignored this Norfolk knight and his part in English history.

In doing so, however, historians have neglected an opportunity to study Medieval knighthood in the course of researching the career of an all-too-worthy subject. There are signs, however, that a full-scale work on Sir Thomas Erpingham's life is in its embryonic stage. In a letter from the Norfolk Heraldry Society, Elizabeth Armstrong informed this author of a plan to publish a book on Erpingham in the late 1990s. She mentioned the respected military historian Dr. Anne Curry as being part of the project.<sup>3</sup>

It is Sir Thomas' early years, the little-known period before he burst into national prominence in 1399, where the effort of this paper is focused. Erpingham's experiences during the period 1380-1399 are the keys to understanding the career and motivations of this martial Norfolk gentleman who was instrumental in vanquishing the French at Agincourt on St. Crispin's Day.

## **The Connection between Sir Thomas Erpingham and John of Gaunt**

Sir Thomas Erpingham's family claimed to have resided in East Anglia since the time of William the Conqueror, taking their name from the village of South Erpingham, with the first lord of Erpingham's manor being recorded in the thirteenth century.<sup>4</sup>

Evidence indicates one of Sir Thomas' ancestors (Robert—his great-great grandfather) was lord of the manor in 1244.<sup>5</sup> Robert's son, John Erpingham, eventually owned other lands that included manors in Wykmere, Calthorp, and Aldburgh.<sup>6</sup>

Sir Thomas' grandfather, Sir Robert de Erpingham, became influential enough to be elected to Parliament, representing the county of Norfolk from 1332 to 1334 and again in 1340.<sup>7</sup> Those were important Parliaments in the early years of King Edward III's reign. The 1332 meeting at York supported the king in his attempt to raise an army to subjugate the Scots, and, consequently, on July 19, 1333, the Scots were crushed at the Battle of Halidon Hill. In 1340, Parliament forced King Edward to accept certain limits on his power to borrow money (an important constraint as the Hundred Years War had begun in 1336) and a council was appointed to rule during the king's periods of overseas campaigning. Sir Robert's role in these Parliaments is not known, but the mere fact that he participated is evidence of the relative prominence of the Erpingham family in East Anglia.<sup>8</sup>

Sir Thomas' father, Sir John de Erpingham, was also a leading official in Norfolk. It appears Sir John married Beatrice Repps (the date of their vows is not known) who was a member of a prosperous East Anglian family who also claimed to have settled in England around the time of the Norman invasion.<sup>9</sup> He received an appointment as bailiff of Norwich in 1352 and 1360. As a component of the English legal system, the bailiff

was part of the administration of lands and manors. Sir John's responsibilities would have included ensuring that the proper crops were planted in the county at the required times and that the plowing, reaping, and other services were performed correctly by those servants or tenants whose duty it was to do them.<sup>10</sup>

Sir John de Erpingham also served in the Norwich militia (for the Leet of Mancroft) during the middle of the fourteenth century.<sup>11</sup> He is listed as serving "*cum j hom' arm' & ij sagittariis*" ("with one armed man and two archers") for the fee of 10 shillings.<sup>12</sup> This was the period in English military history that witnessed the ascendancy of the longbow in combat (the defeat of the Scots at Halidon Hill is but one example). In the Statute of Winchester (1285), King Edward I had urged Englishmen to practice the use of this weapon as means of training themselves for the defense of their country or as members of an overseas expedition.<sup>13</sup> No doubt Sir Thomas learned the importance and use of the longbow during his youth; a skill he would display quite prominently during his lengthy military career.

Whatever instruction he received from his father, Thomas Erpingham must have gotten it while he was quite young. Sir Thomas was born in 1357; his father and grandfather both died in 1370 when he was 13. Where he lived and who protected him (and his younger sister Julian) until he achieved his majority in 1372 is not known. There are no available records that reveal Erpingham's activities during the period 1370-1380. Given the fact that his family was renowned and prosperous in Norfolk it seems certain Sir Thomas was cared for and protected. It seems quite likely, however, that it was his position as heir to the Erpingham estates that allowed Sir Thomas to receive the

opportunity that would change the course of his life: an indenture into the retinue of John of Gaunt.

John of Gaunt (1340-1399), King of Castile and Leon, Duke of Aquitaine and Lancaster, Earl of Derby, Lincoln, Richmond, and Leicester, Seneschal of England, was the greatest landowner in late-fourteenth century England. Gaunt's life was a series of military campaigns, fruitful marriages, and dedication to the medieval code of chivalry. In order to understand the military career and indenture of Sir Thomas Erpingham, it is necessary to examine John of Gaunt's exploits before 1380 at some length.

Gaunt was born in March 1340 in the town of Ghent in Flanders. His father, King Edward III [see genealogical chart, page 78], was on the Continent fighting the French in the early stages of what eventually would be termed the Hundred Years War (1337-1453). The causes of the war were various (*e.g.* territorial boundaries, feudal rights, French aid to Scotland, Edward's claim to the French throne), but the primary dilemma was the "incompatibility of the English possession of French soil with the stage of national centralization which the French kings had attained by the fourteenth century."<sup>14</sup>

Gaunt's early years were spent living in the immense shadow of his father, and of his eldest brother, Edward, the Prince of Wales (known to history as Shakespeare's "Black Prince"). The military exploits of these men who dominated the early period of the Hundred Years War are the material of Medieval legend. Shortly after Gaunt's birth King Edward captained a fleet that annihilated the French navy at the Battle of Sluys (June 24<sup>th</sup>). The king and the Black Prince fought side-by-side at the overwhelming English victory at Crécy in 1346; and the Prince of Wales commanded the English army that crushed a French army at Poitiers in 1356 and took prisoner the king of France



(John II).

The Medieval period in Europe was an era in which men participated in military affairs at a very early age (the Black Prince was 16 when he fought so bravely at Crécy). When he was ten years-old, John of Gaunt began his military career during sharp fighting in a naval encounter off the Sussex coast. During the course of that engagement, in a turn of events that was a harbinger of things to come, Gaunt's life was in danger until he was saved by the actions of Henry Grosmont, first Duke of Lancaster, and Gaunt's future father-in-law.<sup>15</sup>

Continuing his military training during the rest of his young adulthood, Gaunt participated in a raid through Picardy in 1355, during which his father knighted him. In November of that year, he accompanied the king as they returned to England to counter the latest in a series of Scottish threats. Gaunt was a witness to the pleadings of the Countess of Douglas to King Edward III, not to burn the city of Edinburgh—an act of mercy that Gaunt would duplicate almost thirty years later.<sup>16</sup>

It was during Christmas 1357, that John of Gaunt first met another man who, like Sir Thomas Erpingham, would flourish as a member of Gaunt's retinue and through his friendship—Geoffrey Chaucer. Helping sponsor the author who later would write The Canterbury Tales and other famous Medieval English works, this relationship ensured for Chaucer “the favour of the Court, so long as his patron lived, and, after his death, the protection of the new dynasty.” The Duke of Lancaster's devotion to Chaucer reveals a love of intellectual pursuits that complemented his martial spirit. This combination distinguished Gaunt from the more “rough and brutal” chivalric warriors of the late Middle Ages.<sup>17</sup>

On May 19, 1359, John of Gaunt married Blanche of Lancaster, younger daughter of Henry Grosmont, Duke of Lancaster. Grosmont was Edward III's principal associate, one of his stoutest military allies (he was only the second person to be given the title of duke in English history; the first was the Black Prince), and one of the most prominent landowners in England. Both Grosmont and the Edward were direct descendants of King Henry III (1216-1272). Henry held four earldoms and maintained lands in twenty-six counties while serving on at least fifteen expeditions in the service of his king. According to one historian, "[h]is only failing was in producing a son to continue his line."<sup>18</sup>

King Edward III was involved conspicuously in arranging the marriages of his children. He realized that the strength and continuation of his dynasty depended on the territorial expansion and financial fortification of his family's possessions. Ironically, Grosmont was the English king's representative in an attempt (in 1351) to negotiate a possible marriage between Gaunt and the daughter of the Count of Flanders. Those negotiations failed and Gaunt married Lancaster's younger daughter Blanche instead. The marriage to Blanche of Lancaster gave King Edward's son the resources to satisfy his considerable ambitions (Duke Henry, Gaunt's new father-in-law, died on March 23, 1361). These resources doubled when Matilda, Blanche's elder sister, died on April 10, 1362 and all the substantial holdings of Duke Henry came under the control of Gaunt. He was created second Duke of Lancaster on November 13, 1362, and his immense Lancastrian inheritance helped finance his military exploits and the numerous retinue of which Sir Thomas Erpingham became a member.<sup>19</sup>

John of Gaunt's adult military career began not in France, the principal setting of the Hundred Years War and where he had seen action as a boy, but instead in the Iberian Peninsula. His participation in the Black Prince's invasion of Castile in February 1367 inaugurated 20 years of Gaunt's involvement in the internal politics of that country and gave him his first taste of commanding an English army.

The Prince of Wales, in his role as Prince of Aquitaine, decided to espouse the cause of the deposed King Pedro of Castile. That king had been overthrown by Enrique of Trastamare (his illegitimate brother) and had fled to Bayonne; Prince Edward resolved to restore Pedro to his throne. Gaunt was involved with the invasion from its inception and played an important role in the victory won at Najera (April 3, 1367) over the famous French general Bertrand du Guesclin. His elder brother gave John of Gaunt a prominent place in the invading army in order to "concentrate in the van some of his best English troops" that Lancaster had brought from England.<sup>20</sup> The fourteenth-century English chronicler Henry Knighton describes the Duke of Lancaster as "[leading] the expedition."<sup>21</sup>

John of Gaunt led troops to France in 1369, 1373, and 1378. His father, King Edward, was then too old to campaign in France and young princes like Gaunt had taken his place. The Duke of Lancaster's exploits in France suffers in comparison to the earlier victories by Edward III and the Black Prince, however, it was the crushing defeats inflicted upon the French by these commanders in the early years of the war that in some ways made Gaunt's expeditions such a disappointment. In order to avoid a repeat of the Crécy and Poitiers disasters, French military leaders adopted a new strategy of refusing to fight the English in pitched battles. This new policy was successful both in evading the

English army and soiling Lancaster's military reputation. The indecisive results of these campaigns would come back to haunt John of Gaunt and his relationship with the new King of England—Richard II.<sup>22</sup>

Political events in England soon became paramount for the Duke of Lancaster. In 1377 the warrior-king who had won glory for England in France, King Edward III, passed away. His son and heir apparent, Edward, the Black Prince, had died in 1376. In between the death of prince and king, and because of rumors that the great duke wanted the crown for himself, Gaunt had summoned the great feudatories of the kingdom and in their presence pledged loyalty to Prince Edward's ten-year-old son Richard (the duke's nephew) as heir to the throne.<sup>23</sup>

Duke John of Lancaster was placed in a very difficult political position. Appointed steward of England at his nephew's coronation, he was the *de facto* regent of England. Unfortunately, the people of England could not overlook the fact that Gaunt, having done all he could during his adult life to husband power, might be tempted to seize the throne of England. Despite Lancaster's pledge of loyalty, King Richard willingly accepted stories about his unpopular uncle's supposed perfidy. In fact, Lancaster made a speech in Parliament less than three months after Richard's coronation defending himself against rumors that he desired to replace his nephew on the throne. A Parliamentary proposal that the duke become young Richard's *de jure* regent was rejected because of Lancaster's widespread unpopularity.<sup>24</sup> The persistent whispers about his uncle's royal ambitions would sour relations between Richard II and John of Gaunt until the end of the duke's life.

While he was campaigning in France in 1369, Lancaster's wife Blanche died when the "Great Plague" swept through England. At age twenty-nine, the widower Gaunt was still a young man of ambition, intent on enhancing his Continental reputation. To that end, in September 1371, Lancaster chose for his second wife the daughter of Don Pedro, the murdered King of Castile and Leon, and his designated successor to the throne. The duke's marriage to Constance was described as one of "convenience" and is attributed primarily to Gaunt's ambition and his new wife's desire for vengeance against those who killed her father in 1369.<sup>25</sup>

Once again, however, the son of Edward III had married into a situation filled with the possibilities for wealth and glory. Whether theirs was a romantic match is unimportant; what matters is the persistent attempt of the Duke of Lancaster to procure funds from Parliament to return to Castile and claim what he asserted was his rightful inheritance. When, in 1386, Gaunt finally was able to campaign in the Iberian Peninsula, Sir Thomas Erpingham was among the knights under his command.<sup>26</sup>

In the first forty years of his life, Duke John of Lancaster had been able to secure immense lands and wealth from his marriage to Blanche of Lancaster. He had become a military commander of vast experience, but lukewarm reputation. After Blanche's death, Lancaster had entered into another marriage whose kingly benefits could be substantial. Through his relationship with Geoffrey Chaucer, Lancaster had distinguished himself as a patron of the literary arts. Finally, by the time Richard II became king, Lancaster was acknowledged as the most powerful magnate in England. The sinew for these achievements and military expeditions was his Lancastrian inheritance. The

income derived from his numerous estates is what made possible his overseas adventures, political influence, and immense retinue.

The creation and maintaining of a retinue was something that was expected of an English lord during the Middle Ages. The heart of a landed magnate's retinue was the men, esquires and knights, whom his lord had retained for life. Usually, retainers were drawn from among the country gentry and who would protect the interests of their lord in a local town or county. The main service rendered by these men, however, was fighting. These were men who quickly could be mustered for service to defend the rights of their lord or engage in overseas combat with him. The wording of the indenture contract explicitly stated that members of a retinue would fight wherever their lord decided to fight.

The Duke of Lancaster was no exception to this practice; indeed, he was the personification of it. While the careful management of his landed estates gave him the resources to support his retinue, the success of his military schemes and his prominence in national policy depended equally upon his ability to increase the size of his permanent retinue by attracting to his service men like Thomas Erpingham. During his over thirty-five years of service to the House of Lancaster, Sir Thomas Erpingham would make no less than six trips out of England to campaign on behalf of his lord.<sup>27</sup>

In return Sir Thomas Erpingham received the protection and prestige that accompanied membership in the largest retinue in fourteenth-century England. Erpingham also received increased financial opportunities. Concomitant with the pay he received from Lancaster, there was the possibility of accumulating fortunes in the course

of military campaigning. The duke allowed his retainers to keep about two-thirds of the plunder and ransoms amassed as a result of fighting overseas.<sup>28</sup>

There is no conclusive evidence that proves a relationship between Gaunt and the Erpingham family existed prior to the indenture of Sir Thomas in 1380. It seems most likely, however, that the proximity of their holdings in Norfolk was one source of initial contact [see map, page 79].<sup>29</sup> Gaunt's lands in Norfolk were valued at £900 per annum, which made him one of the most prosperous landowners in the county.<sup>30</sup> The manor of Aylsham, a possession of the Duchy of Lancaster, was very close to the parish of Erpingham—the area of Sir Thomas' youth and early education. In 1372, the duke relinquished some lands in Richmond and received, among others, the hundreds of North and South Erpingham in return.<sup>31</sup> Also recorded are visits by the duke in 1372 and 1378/79 with the purpose of inspecting his lands in East Anglia. It is also known that Lancaster was in Norfolk in 1380 (the same year as Erpingham's indenture) to visit the shrine of Our Lady of Walsingham.<sup>32</sup> Given the prominence of the Erpinghams in the area, it is certainly likely that the duke knew of them and may have consulted with them on various topics relating to local politics and manorial management. The social status of the Erpingham family and their history of service in eastern England made Thomas Erpingham a “natural target in Norfolk” for Gaunt's recruiting efforts.<sup>33</sup>

Another possible link between John of Gaunt and Sir Thomas Erpingham was the former's involvement with Lollardry. The Lollards (from the Dutch *lollaerd*, “babbler”) were a collection of religious reformers in England who followed the teachings of John Wycliffe (c. 1330-1384), who criticized ecclesiastical abuses and certain Church doctrine. Prominent during the last quarter of the fourteenth century and the beginning of

the fifteenth, Lollards denounced the immense wealth of the clergy, the authority of the papacy, the interference of the state in Church affairs, and even the belief in transubstantiation.<sup>34</sup>

According to one historian, “[Wycliffe] had the notable support of the good Duke of Lancaster, who was an invincible guardian to him and his followers in all their needs, for otherwise they would have fallen into the pit of destruction.”<sup>35</sup> Gaunt’s patronage of Wycliffe has been explained mostly in terms of political expediency. What truly united these two very different men, however, was their shared belief, albeit from different perspectives, that English ecclesiastical officials were spending too much time accumulating wealth and interfering in temporal affairs, rather than tending to the spiritual needs of the people of England.<sup>36</sup>

Sir Thomas’ first wife, Joan Clopton (the date of their marriage is unknown), was reported to be an admirer of Lollard doctrine. It also is reported that Erpingham was “inclined to Lollardry” and, as a member of Lancaster's retinue, would be bound to support the objectives of his lord.<sup>37</sup> Although it is not likely, however, that this proposed connection is nearly as instrumental as the relationship between the prominence of the Erpingham family holdings in Norfolk and their proximity to the lands of the Duchy of Lancaster, the impact of Lollardry should not be dismissed.

Yet another possibility is that the Medieval practice of wardship was a factor in the relationship between Gaunt and Erpingham. Wardship was exercised over a fief while the heir (in this case Sir Thomas) was a minor. The feudal lord administered the estates on the heir’s behalf until the latter reached majority (age 15). Since the rights could be sold, they often led to ruthless profiteering and remained a lucrative source of



income until abolished by the Long Parliament (1640-1660). The lord was also entitled to take considerable profits in the lands under his wardship.<sup>38</sup>

Sir Thomas was only 13 when his father died and it is likely his lands went into some sort of wardship for about two years. It is clear, however, in this particular case that the Duke of Lancaster did not administer or purchase his wardship. Simon Walker's exhaustive study of Lancaster's retinue from 1361 to 1399 does not place Erpingham in the group of knights who entered the duke's retinue through wardship. In fact, Walker emphasizes the importance of military service in the manner by which Lancaster chose his retinue—the precise path followed by Sir Thomas Erpingham.<sup>39</sup>

Late fourteenth-century England was a time of political intrigue, military adventures, and witness to the establishment of the kingly House of Lancaster. During 1380-1399, as he graduated from newly-indentured knight to trusted member of the Lancastrian inner-circle, both the bravery and loyalty of Sir Thomas Erpingham would be of utmost importance.

## Sir Thomas Erpingham's Early Military Service (1380-1385)

It was at York, on September 25, 1380, that Sir Thomas Erpingham received indenture into the retinue of the Duke of Lancaster. Gaunt was in York because, on September 6<sup>th</sup>, he had been appointed by Richard II as a special envoy to treat with Scotland in hopes of negotiating a peace agreement between the two countries.<sup>40</sup> Perhaps it was due to the possibility of an outbreak of hostilities during this assignment that the Duke of Lancaster chose this time to add Erpingham to his retinue. Sir Thomas became one of Gaunt's knights bachelor, obligated to serve his lord in war with one esquire, with an annual pay of £20.<sup>41</sup> The precise language of the indenture (a typical one of the late Middle Ages) is:

Sir Thomas to serve the duke for life in peace and war, and to go with him to war wherever he wishes, with an esquire, etc., suitably arrayed for war; to receive in time of peace, for himself and esquire £20 a year from the manor of Gimingham in Norfolk, and to have wages and food at court whenever sent by the command of the duke. In time of war to receive for himself and his esquire 50 marks a year and to have wages or food as other bachelors of his rank. For horses lost in the duke's service, for the beginning of his year of war, for prisoners of war and other booty taken by himself or his men, and for the freight of himself and his men and horses, the duke to do for him as for other bachelors of his rank.<sup>42</sup>

The indenture articulates the many services the knight and his new lord must render to each other. For example, the section of the indenture that deals with "horses lost in the duke's service" is known as *restor*. The origin of this clause is not well known, but records indicate it was promised to knights as early as the reign of King Henry I (1100-1135).<sup>43</sup> The practice had abated somewhat during the last quarter of the fourteenth century and is likely a measure of the importance of Erpingham's willingness

to serve Lancaster (or the importance of his family) that he was able to secure this guarantee.

Due to the Duke of Lancaster's prominence in English affairs, the newly-knighted Erpingham did not have to wait long to be called into service. As the richest and most prominent landowner in the kingdom, and the most influential of King Richard's uncles, Lancaster usually was given most of the important diplomatic assignments and, because of the size of his retinue, important military commands. The political and diplomatic situation in late-fourteenth century England meant there would be many opportunities for a young knight, like Sir Thomas Erpingham, to gain valuable experience in the service of his lord.

The first of these chances was Lancaster's expedition to Scotland in 1381. Since 1369 an uneasy peace had existed between the two countries—a peace that was marked by petty fighting and seizing of various towns by both sides. It was a time when both governments desired peace, but were unable to control the militant border populations who refused to accept it.<sup>44</sup> It was not until a diplomatic mission to Scotland in 1380 that John of Gaunt had been involved to any significant degree in Anglo-Scottish affairs. In that year he had negotiated an extension of the truce between the two countries that expired on June 9, 1381.<sup>45</sup>

Lancaster was convinced that harmonious relations with Scotland were in England's best political and diplomatic interests—especially considering the ever-present threat of an Anglo-French military confrontation. France was the mortal enemy of England during the Middle Ages and the prime beneficiary of protracted Anglo-Scottish conflict. The 'Auld Alliance' is the name given to the Medieval diplomatic and military

relationship between France and Scotland. Aimed at England, this alliance had as its mission the dissipation of English military strength.<sup>46</sup>

Personally, John of Gaunt was very well-disposed towards the Scots. He had Scots as knights in his retinue and Scottish lancers had fought in his campaigns in France.<sup>47</sup> For Gaunt, a settlement of the Scottish problem would free monies to be used to press his claim to the throne of Castile and allow England to maintain a strong presence in France (where the Crown still had immense territorial holdings). He was fair and impartial in treating with Scotland. Gaunt's biographer wrote that Lancaster's "idea of [foreign] relations was that there should be peace in time of peace and war in war...he was willing to give judgment against his own side, punish the offender, and make redress."<sup>48</sup>

Sir Thomas Erpingham was among the 2,000 English troops present when the duke assumed command of the border on May 20, 1381. Erpingham's first military assignment, however, was quite peaceful. Lancaster's mission to Scotland, one of quelling the raids that disturbed the peace along the border between the two countries, was accomplished quickly and without bloodshed. The most important factors in this result were the cordial relationship between the duke and the Scots, and the fact that a serious rebellion was growing in England.<sup>49</sup>

This latter development, known as the Peasants' Revolt, would prove to be, in part, a direct assault on the holdings of the Duke of Lancaster. For the duke, the necessity of protecting his lands was more important than his diplomatic mission to Scotland. One source states it was "the rumours of the rising which reached [Lancaster] caused him to hasten to conclude a treaty with the Scots", which he did on June 8<sup>th</sup>.<sup>50</sup> In

fact, Gaunt had traveled no farther north than Berwick (on the Anglo-Scottish border) before he dismissed Erpingham and the rest of his retinue around June 20<sup>th</sup>.<sup>51</sup> Gaunt's relationship with Scottish officials was so good that they even offered him an army to use to protect his property from the insurgents. The duke politely declined their militarily helpful but, for him, politically unwise offer.<sup>52</sup>

The Peasants' Revolt (1381-82) was the result of growing conflict between tenants and landlords. The Black Death, falling population, and rising wages all contributed heavily to the unrest at the heart of this conflict. Landlords pushed wage controls through the House of Commons in 1349 and passed the first of the Statutes of Laborers (which limited wage increases) in 1351. "Tenants and wage-earners felt wronged by this legislation, and many reached the conclusion, not unfounded, that the ruling orders were conspiring against them."<sup>53</sup> Wage frustration was compounded by a series of poll taxes passed between 1377-1381.

During the Revolt, the insurgents targeted Gaunt's properties throughout England. According to Gaunt's biographer, Sydney Armitage-Smith, "The Rebels hated the Duke as the most prominent man in England, as the type of [administrator] responsible for their troubles."<sup>54</sup> Gaunt's palace at Savoy (in London) was destroyed on June 13<sup>th</sup> and his castle at Hertford soon afterward. His wife, Constance of Castile, fled from her home in Leicester and sought safety in her husband's castle at Knaresborough (near York). Lancaster was personally unable to return to England for fear of his own safety. "For all in those troubles the commons had the greatest hatred for the peaceable Duke of Lancaster, above all mortal men, and if they had come upon him they would have destroyed him without hesitation."<sup>55</sup>

It was on June 16, 1381 that rebellious activities began to occur in Norfolk with an isolated attack on the manor house at Methwold—a possession of the Duke of Lancaster. The Norfolk insurgents also broke into and plundered the house of Edmund Gurney, steward of the duke's lands in Norfolk and Suffolk.<sup>56</sup> On March 8, 1382, Sir Thomas Erpingham was appointed as a commissioner of array in Norfolk to aid in the suppression of the rebellion.<sup>57</sup>

Commissions of array were first established by King Edward I (1272-1307) as a means of collecting together foot soldiers to defend England from invasions and insurrections. In the beginning it was the sheriff's responsibility to muster this force, but soon the task belonged primarily to a household knight of the king or prominent landowner—the latter being precisely the situation in the case of Thomas Erpingham's appointment in 1382. The commissioners worked with local officials in the villages and in the country to muster as many men as possible.<sup>58</sup>

Erpingham's return to his home county aided the suppression of the rebellion as it is clear that the Revolt crumbled due to its participants' being confronted by trained men-at-arms. "[The Revolt's leaders] seem to have thought their position was far stronger than it was, and did not sufficiently realise that, without military training, mere numbers and enthusiasm must always avail but little."<sup>59</sup>

What Sir Thomas Erpingham might have learned from the suppressing of the rebellion, however, was the dual nature of being indentured to a powerful man like the Duke of Lancaster. He was protected by, and received fees from, the richest landowner in England. By aligning himself so closely with Gaunt, however, Erpingham also

acquired the risk to his own property and future by inheriting Gaunt's enemies—be they disgruntled peasants or the king.

The early reign of Richard II was a troubling time for Erpingham's lord. Gaunt was viewed suspiciously by members of the king's household and by the ordinary Englishman.<sup>60</sup> Many in Richard's kingdom questioned whether Gaunt was satisfied with being Duke of Lancaster, or did he have designs on his young nephew's throne? This meant that Erpingham could be called upon to protect the interests of his lord—something quite different than protecting England from Scottish raids or participating in an invasion of France. As Sir Thomas was obligated “to serve the duke for life in peace and war, and to go with him to war wherever he wishes”, his future was married inexorably with that of the Duke of Lancaster. It was during 1384-1385, in which Sir Thomas Erpingham participated in two invasions of Scotland with John of Gaunt, that he would get his first experience in small-scale military campaigning.

In December 1383, meanwhile, Richard dispatched Lancaster to France to negotiate an extension of the existing Anglo-French peace treaty. The result was the Truce of Lelighen in which peace was assured until September 1384. If the time covered in the treaty seems short, Gaunt had also won the important concession (from the French) that Scotland could become a party to the agreement. Gaunt also knew that monies not spent in Scotland, whether his own or those voted by Parliament, could be used to underwrite an expedition to Castile so he could win the Castilian crown. Much of the duke's energies during the early 1380s were spent attempting to secure peace with both France and Scotland.<sup>61</sup>

The Scottish, however, had other ideas. The truce between England and Scotland ended on February 2, 1384. Three days later, a Scot by the name of Archibald Douglas attacked and captured Lochmaben Castle (located near the Anglo-Scottish border). King Richard decided that an English army must crush this latest Scottish threat—an assignment given to John of Gaunt.<sup>62</sup>

Gaunt's main contribution to the expedition was his immense retinue. Although none of the records for this mission have survived that would attest to the size of the force Lancaster used for the invasion, it was probably about the size of the force (2,000) he commanded in Scotland in 1380.<sup>63</sup>

Because of his warm disposition towards the Scots, Gaunt did not agree with the King's Council's decision to invade Scotland. He was unhappy with the prospect of undoing the months of negotiation that had resulted in the Truce of Lelinghen. Consequently, Lancaster conducted operations so to appease the king and Parliament by creating the impression that he was inflicting great harm upon the Scots, while, in reality, he caused as little destruction as possible. After mustering at Newcastle and entering Scotland on April 4, 1384, the duke's army, which included Sir Thomas Erpingham, most of Gaunt's other retainers, and some archers, marched north through Haddington, Berwick, Dunbar, and, finally, Edinburgh.<sup>64</sup>

The Scots followed their usual policy of retreating before an invading army and avoiding pitched battles. This time, however, their adversary was quite willing to let them go without vigorous pursuit or large-scale loss of property. "Arriving within striking distance of Edinburgh, the duke called a halt, and refused to leave his camp until



the citizens had had time to remove their property. When the army entered, the city was deserted.”<sup>65</sup>

Lancaster’s army remained in Scotland for about two weeks, during which time they kept up the appearance of a punitive expedition by “[destroying] several villages and manors, and cut down woods and burned them.”<sup>66</sup> Unfortunately, the duke’s army suffered from severe cold and from the duke’s relatively gentle treatment of the Scots (*i.e.*, he did not allow his army to pillage freely the Scottish countryside in search of supplies and shelter). It would be a harbinger of things to come for Sir Thomas Erpingham as he would experience similar hardships later in the Duke of Lancaster’s Iberian campaign.<sup>67</sup>

Lancaster’s ‘polite’ campaign in Scotland in 1384 not only failed to inflict any real damage on the Scots, but also gave rise to attempts, in early 1385, to discredit him in the eyes of young King Richard II. The effect of these attempted conspiracies against Gaunt was quite ironic. Instead of eliminating him as an influence on King Richard, the inept plotters succeeded in making the duke a sympathetic figure. The hatred of Lancaster by the English people that was prevalent so violently during the Peasants’ Rebellion, now was transferred to Robert de Vere and other members of the king’s circle of advisors.<sup>68</sup>

Robert de Vere, Duke of Ireland, Earl of Oxford, and Marquess of Dublin (the first English marquess) was the favorite of Richard II and one the loudest voices against the power and influence of the Duke of Lancaster. De Vere was a member of the so-called ‘duketti’ (the name given contemptuously to the vast number of people King Richard had elevated to a dukedom) and whose mission seemingly was to convince the

king that Lancaster had designs on the throne. The initial willingness of Richard to believe these men and their accusations possibly made Sir Thomas Erpingham personally contemptible of King Richard, and, as a member of Lancaster's retinue, fearful about his own future should the Duke of Ireland's treachery succeed against his lord.<sup>69</sup>

During a jousting tournament February 1385 at Westminster Hall, a plot to kill the Duke of Lancaster was hatched by de Vere. The scheme involved the testimony of a Carmelite friar, whose religious order was supported by the duke and whose testimony was supposed to add credibility to the charge, who lied to King Richard about a conspiracy afoot to place John of Gaunt on the throne of England. The friar also told Richard that Gaunt was an active promoter of the project. The king exploded in rage and ordered that his uncle be seized and put to death.<sup>70</sup>

When told of the plot, Lancaster immediately went to the king offering to prove his innocence by wager of battle against de Vere and the other conspirators. As a result of the Gaunt's bold protest, King Richard recanted his earlier orders and supported his powerful uncle. This calmed the waters of conspiracy a bit, but soon they grew more stormy. In another plan conceived by de Vere, Lancaster was to be charged (during a meeting of the King's Council) with attempting to seize the throne. Judges sympathetic to the scheme would be employed and the duke would be convicted of treason and executed. It is in Gaunt's forceful response to this latest outrage that we can perhaps include Sir Thomas as a participant.<sup>71</sup>

On the night of February 24, 1385, Lancaster took a strong military escort to Sheen in Kent where King Richard was staying. He left some of his retinue to guard the barge he had used to cross the Thames, but took most of his men to the castle and gave

strict orders to prevent anyone else from entering or leaving. It is not known for sure whether Sir Thomas Erpingham was part of the river force or castle guard, but given the importance of the mission, it is safe to assume that Gaunt would want as many of his retinue with him as possible.<sup>72</sup>

While inside the king's house, Gaunt angrily denounced the plots against him and remonstrated against Richard's choice of advisors. "He upbraided the king for acting shamefully and lawlessly and for letting down [the Crown] by countenancing vengeance by murder."<sup>73</sup> King Richard was contrite and promised his support to help discover and prosecute the people behind these plots against Lancaster's life. The rift between the two men was serious enough, moreover, to require the intervention of Princess Joan of Kent (widow of the Black Prince and the king's mother) to heal it. The Princess of Wales was aware of the importance of a good and trusting relationship between the king and his most powerful uncle. She brought the king and the duke together for a meeting at Winchester during which the latter proclaimed himself reconciled with de Vere and Mowbray.<sup>74</sup>

Perhaps because of this *rapprochement*, the Duke of Lancaster again was pressed into diplomatic service. Beginning in July 1384, he negotiated a truce with France that also included a clause inviting Scotland (also Castile, Flanders, and Navarre) to become part of an extended peace. Unfortunately, Lancaster was unable to procure the long-term treaty he and Parliament desired. As always, Lancaster was eager to maintain peace with France so he could press his claims to the crown of Castile, but he was able only to extend the already existing truce until May 1, 1385. It was not long after their meeting with Lancaster that the French began to plan, with the Scots, a simultaneous invasion of

England. A French fleet was assembled at Sluys with the purpose of transporting an army across the Channel. As part of the response to this threat, Erpingham, in January 1385, again was named a commissioner of the array in the county of Norfolk.<sup>75</sup>

While France was mustering a fleet for their portion of the invasion scheme, they also sent Jean de Vienne, a prominent marshal, to Scotland with a force of French lances to divert English strength to the Anglo-Scottish border. This was potentially a serious situation for the young Richard, whose kingdom barely had recovered from the upheaval caused by the Peasants' Rebellion and by the intrigue within his own Council. Luckily for the English, the French Channel fleet had its army diverted to the Low Countries to quell an attempted coup in the coastal town of Ghent. The Scottish portion of the attack, however, continued as planned.<sup>76</sup>

It was King Richard II who led the second expedition into Scotland in which Sir Thomas participated. The circumstances of the campaign and the size of the invasion force makes it a virtual certainty that Sir Thomas was a participant as Gaunt is said to have contributed over 3,000 men (out of a total of 13,734) and "all the great feudatories brought their retainers."<sup>77</sup> In July 1385, the king arrived in Durham to find the Duke of Lancaster waiting for him. Lancaster's force was comprised of 14 bannerets, 136 knights, 850 esquires, and 2,000 archers.<sup>78</sup> This invasion force also was comprised of feudal levies—whose term of service (40 days) limited the amount of time the king had to accomplish his mission. In fact, this was the last time the feudal levy was called to service and it allowed the king to amass an impressive army.<sup>79</sup>

On August 6<sup>th</sup>, King Richard entered Scotland and immediately discarded the somewhat tolerant course that Lancaster had followed the previous year. The Scots

employed their usual retreating tactics which meant few French or Scottish soldiers were captured and no large-scale battle occurred. The English, moreover, executed the small number of prisoners they seized. The monasteries were burnt (in retaliation for Scottish support for the Avignon pope, Clement VII<sup>80</sup>) and abbeys, which had been spared by the duke in earlier invasions, were leveled.<sup>81</sup>

There is no surviving correspondence to detail how Sir Thomas felt about the treatment of these holy places. He was, on one hand, a knight whose business it was to serve his master in war, which makes it probable that whatever he felt, he did not voice his opinions to the Duke of Lancaster. The late-fourteenth century was also an age of growing nationalism and it is possible that, as an Englishman, Erpingham did not mind the indiscriminate destruction of Scottish property. Conversely, he was a religious man who would later spend great sums to build a gate to the cathedral at Norwich and stained glass windows at other churches. It is hard to contend, therefore, that such a patron of Christianity would agree with the destruction of places of worship.

Not long after the mission had begun, the English entered Edinburgh to find the city deserted and stripped of all food and supplies. Besides being unable to provision and feed his troops, the king also faced a strategic problem. One of the Scottish armies had fled too far north to be pursued, but another had marched west and attacked the English city of Carlisle near the Scottish border. John of Gaunt wanted to seek and destroy that army (an outcome that would have aided greatly his schemes with regard to Castile) before returning to the starting point of Newcastle. Although a council of war adopted the plan advocated by Gaunt, de Vere and other favorites of the king turned Richard against it (appealing to the young king's jealousy of his powerful uncle). King Richard

not only rejected Lancaster's military advice, but reminded him of his previous military failures (in France) and accused him of being disloyal.<sup>82</sup> It was then decided that the invasion force, despite its mission being unfulfilled, would return to England. King Richard's army, including Sir Thomas Erpingham, returned to Newcastle on August 20, 1385.<sup>83</sup>

The episode in which the king rebuked Lancaster's strategy is crucial because it led directly to the duke's departure from England. Richard, like most monarchs, had aristocrats in his household who vied constantly for his favor. Those royal householders, like Robert de Vere, who were bent on destroying the relationship between uncle and nephew, did so in an attempt to increase their influence over the king. In the course of repudiating Gaunt's strategy and prodded by members of the royal household, King Richard had called the duke a "traitor" and told him that Lancaster's component of the army could stay in Scotland, but the rest of the troops were returning to England.

The treatment of Lancaster by King Richard could also have had an effect on Sir Thomas Erpingham. The undoubted sense of loyalty felt by the young knight towards his lord surely was enhanced by the notion of the eighteen year-old king's humiliating Duke John in front of others; Sir Thomas' respect for Richard might have been diminished by this unwarranted attack. Perhaps it was, in part, due to this incident and the feelings of mistrust that it created, that Erpingham was such a willing and conspicuous participant in the overthrow of Richard in 1399.

At this point, Lancaster had had enough of the king and his favorites. Reading the political situation, he avoided treason by abandoning his plan to attack the Scottish army at Carlisle. Gaunt returned to England with his troops and decided to push Parliament

(and the King's Council) for monies to finance an invasion of Castile to claim the throne of that Iberian kingdom. Ironically, Lancaster argued this proposal would likely gain the support of those aligned against him as it would get him out of the country and diminish his remaining influence over King Richard.<sup>84</sup>

By 1385 Sir Thomas Erpingham was twenty-eight years-old, with five years experience as a member of the Duke of Lancaster's retinue. Sir Thomas' participation in the events of those years afforded him the opportunity to prove both his worth as a knight and his loyalty to the House of Lancaster. From 1380-1385, Sir Thomas' military experiences were in Scotland and England. Beginning with Lancaster's Iberian campaign, Sir Thomas was going to experience warfare on a European scale.

## **Sir Thomas Erpingham's Participation in John of Gaunt's Iberian Campaign**

The genesis of John of Gaunt's involvement in Iberian politics has been mentioned in the first section of this paper. Since his participation in the Black Prince's incursion into Spain in the 1360s, England was considered a natural party in the many petty wars of the Iberian Peninsula.

Portuguese envoys had been in England for some time recruiting soldiers and trying to entice Parliament to underwrite an expedition to confront their aggressive Castilian neighbor. Two realities now worked in favor of their plans: the antagonistic political situation in England involving Lancaster and King Richard (on October 20, 1385, because of suspicions about Lancaster's ambitions, Richard recognized Roger Mortimer as heir to the throne); and the fact that Portugal had won a substantial victory, aided by English mercenary archers, over Castile at Aljubarrota in August 1385. This triumph meant Portugal was safe from a large-scale invasion by the Castilian armies, but it remained vulnerable to raids from petty bands of Castilian troops. King João of Portugal realized this and had his ambassadors stress to Richard and his uncle that now was the time for Gaunt to press his claim to the Castilian throne.<sup>85</sup>

Gaunt had attempted to obtain official backing for an expedition to Iberia just four years earlier. In January 1382 the duke, offering his vast Lancastrian estates as collateral, asked Parliament for £60,000 to subsidize an invasion of Castile. He was met with a lukewarm reaction from the House of Commons, but greater enthusiasm was found in the House of Lords. John of Gaunt created support among the English people by mentioning the close relationship between Castile and England's traditional enemy—France. In the end, because of an expected outbreak of war with France, the duke was not to journey to



the Spanish peninsula. It was a bitter blow for Lancaster, who had called out his retinue (including Sir Thomas Erpingham) for the expected voyage to Spain.<sup>86</sup>

Three years later, in November 1385, Lancaster's request for Parliamentary subsidies met with greater success. By a unanimous vote in Parliament, John, Duke of Lancaster received the funds he requested and readied an army (including his retinue) for the voyage to Iberia.<sup>87</sup>

It was a long process to assemble the men, ships, and supplies that were to be used in the Castilian invasion. Letters of protection (given by the king to signify those who received them were not traveling on their own, but for a purpose sanctioned by the crown) for those participating in the invasion were issued in January 1386.<sup>88</sup> There was also the issue of religious sanction for Gaunt's voyage. Pope Urban VI granted a plenary pardon, "to all who, fortified by the sign of the Cross, should embark in Lancaster's company on the intended expedition, and die truly penitent and confessed."<sup>89</sup>

The duke had to wait more than two months for the impressed ships to arrive at the port of Plymouth, the embarkation point for the mission. This amount of time was required because Gaunt was shipping almost 5,000 men-at-arms and 5,000 support and household personnel.<sup>90</sup> Most of the military personnel, such as the archers, came from the estates controlled by the Duke of Lancaster. Preparing the seemingly inevitable siege that was a part of Medieval warfare, the duke included miners, carpenters, and masons in his army. The movement of Lancaster's army was a major undertaking for the English military transport system and a testament to John of Gaunt's enormous wealth.<sup>91</sup>

There are no details as to the role of Erpingham in the preparations for the voyage to Castile. While arrangements were underway, however, Sir Thomas is known to have

played a part in the *Scrope v. Grosvenor* controversy (concerning which of these two lords named had the right to wear a certain coat of arms). The duke, Erpingham, and some of Lancaster's other knights gave evidence in the famous case. Finally, after delaying so that all his supplies and men could be transported, Lancaster's flotilla finally departed Plymouth on July 7, 1386.<sup>92</sup>

Before Erpingham and the rest of the invasion force reached the peninsula, they heard reports about the siege of Brest (in the northwest corner of France and in an area under English influence) by the Duke of Brittany. As someone deeply devoted to chivalry and the interests of England in Europe, Lancaster could not allow this attack to go unanswered. It is also possible that he wanted to rehearse the difficult landing that would be required when the flotilla arrived at the peninsula. He landed some of his men and, under the command of Lord Fitzwalter, they stormed the forts that were besieging the town. According to one contemporaneous account, "[t]he prior of St. James asked [John of Gaunt] whether he might like to lead the first assault on the fort; and he and his men were soundly beaten off, and he withdrew. And several other likewise attacked it, for two days and more."<sup>93</sup> Eventually, one of the towers was mined and the fort was surrendered to Gaunt. It is not known whether Sir Thomas went ashore as part of the relieving force, but the possibility certainly should not be discounted. If he was involved in the attack, it would have been the first of many sieges in which he would participate as a member of the Lancastrian affinity.<sup>94</sup>

According to one author, it is not possible to follow the movement of Lancaster's forces in Iberia with absolute certainty because the primary sources are "either meagre or hopelessly confused."<sup>95</sup> We must, therefore, turn to the secondary sources, especially

P.E. Russell's The English Intervention in Spain and Portugal in the time of Edward III and Richard II, to follow the progress of the English army. Froissart, one of the leading chroniclers of the late fourteenth century, wrote an account that has been called "the despair of historians hoping to find in it a trustworthy account of what happened in northwestern Spain during the year or more when that region, or most of it, was in the hands of Lancaster and Constance of Castile."<sup>96</sup>

On July 25<sup>th</sup>, the fleet sailed into the port of La Coruña in the northwest corner of Castile in the region known as Galicia [see map, page 80]. It is conjectured this landing-site was chosen because it was close to Portugal, traditionally hostile to King Juan of Castile, and was well known by English seamen.<sup>97</sup> Lancaster and his army immediately marched into the capital and holiest shrine of the region, Saint James of Compostella, and occupied it. Next the English moved south, besieged and captured Orense. The town was the key to holding Galicia and it was there that Lancaster held his court during the fall and winter of 1385-1386.<sup>98</sup>

The conquest of Galicia should not be dismissed as some perfunctory achievement. Although he did not have to face the Castilian army, Lancaster's forces had to march in territory described by Froissart as "not a pleasant one, agreeable to campaign across as France is...that rich country...with those cool rivers lakes, and pools."<sup>99</sup> The absence of a response by the Castilian army can be somewhat explained by its relative lack of size and the fact that it was dispersed throughout the region. The English also were confronted with a population that (initially) was ill-disposed to their presence. The Duke of Lancaster gained the support of the Galicians, however, by purchasing their goods and threatening to put to death any of his soldiers who treated the inhabitants

unfairly, a strategy Sir Thomas Erpingham would see repeated by the duke's grandson in France in 1415.<sup>100</sup>

John of Gaunt's invasion, however, proved to be as much of a political and diplomatic mission as it was a military one. After the initial conquests of the summer, Gaunt commenced negotiations with Portuguese officials to try to bolster his invasion force. One of the perils of Medieval military campaigning, the ending of short-term military contracts, was facing John of Gaunt's army, and no more troops were coming from England. Lancaster's enormous retinue allowed him to offset some of these losses, but the duke needed reinforcements, however, if his campaign in Iberia was to be successful.<sup>101</sup>

On November 1<sup>st</sup>, John of Gaunt and the Portuguese King, Dom João, had a conference to discuss this problem and their strategy against Castile. The result of this meeting was the Treaty of Ponte do Mouro (agreed to on November 11<sup>th</sup>). The military components of this treaty were: King João promised to take the field with 5,000 men to assist Gaunt in his campaign, thus giving the duke the reinforcements he so desperately needed; João agreed not to make a separate truce with King Juan of Castile (while Gaunt was attempting conquest); and Gaunt pledged to help defend Portugal. The Portuguese soldiers would be employed from January until the end of August 1387 and would be paid for by João; if the soldiers were still needed after this period, Gaunt would bear the cost.<sup>102</sup> The objective of the combined Anglo-Portuguese force was to compel the Castilians either to meet them in open battle or retreat into a fortress and risk being besieged.<sup>103</sup>

Leaving in March 1387 from the northern Portuguese town of Braganca,

Lancaster and his Anglo-Portuguese army marched northeast to the Leónese town of Benevente. Their strategy was to march northeast into Leon where, they hoped, the residents of the area would flock to Lancaster's cause.<sup>104</sup> Soldiers were involved also in stirring up support for Lancaster's claim to the throne among ordinary citizens.

Erpingham could have been among those who went from town to town and "summon[ed] the inhabitants...to accept [as] their lawful sovereign Queen Constance and King John."<sup>105</sup>

Because of the fighting in Galicia and the prevalence of disease, the English component of the force was by then reduced to only 1,500 men; the Portuguese numbered around 9,000.<sup>106</sup> Lacking the necessary siege equipment (the siege engines brought from England were not powerful enough), the army spent eight days skirmishing with the Castilians on the periphery of Benevente.<sup>107</sup> This would have been the type of warfare that suited Sir Thomas Erpingham's training and experience. Desultory fighting—perhaps involving longbowmen—is mostly what he had experienced so far in his military career.

From Benevente, Lancaster's troops marched eastward to Valderas. The town was besieged for a few days and surrendered when threatened with an assault. More than once during Gaunt's campaign resistance was offered only because the burgesses of the town feared being pillaged by the English, or there was a fear that submission to Lancaster would be punished later by King Juan of Castile. After staying in Valderas for fifteen days (it was now May), the army moved southwards and laid siege to the town of Villalobos. Sir Thomas Erpingham was about to participate in his fourth siege of the campaign.<sup>108</sup>

It was here that Lancaster achieved his biggest military success of the Iberian expedition. The army was in dire need of supplies (especially hay), and it was in Villalobos that he hoped to procure them. King Juan did not think the Anglo-Portuguese army was powerful enough to successfully besiege the town, so he did not come to its aid. But, after resisting Lancaster's tenacious forces for a few weeks, the garrison decided to surrender. As was the case with the reduction of Orense, the duke obtained the supplies he needed for his army and ordered the townspeople be treated with respect.<sup>109</sup>

Although Lancaster had captured several towns and marched hundreds of miles, he had not been able to engage Castilian King Juan's army in the open field. In tactics typical of the Medieval period, King Juan did not want to risk a decisive battle. However pusillanimous this strategy may seem, it was quite effective and the hope of John of Gaunt, that the English could win a crushing victory as the Portuguese had won at Aljubarrota in 1385, thus securing him the throne, was dashed by the evasive tactics of his enemy.<sup>110</sup>

During the Iberian campaign, Sir Thomas Erpingham and the other troops suffered from the ever-present soldiers' maladies: hunger, discomfort, and disease. Food was scarce because the area in which the English were campaigning could not support the increased number of people. Despite Lancaster's efforts to negotiate with the native population:

the readiness of the Galician peasantry to accept and sell goods to the invaders was fast changing into hostility as month after month passed without any sign that [the English army] was preparing to move to richer parts of the kingdom.<sup>111</sup>

Despite the fact that it was summer, a chronicler reported that the men by “the morning chill which struck through their whole bodies, [gave] them sickness and [afflicted] them with the ‘bellyflux’.”<sup>112</sup> One historian contends over 300 knights perished due to disease during the Castilian expedition, with dysentery and the bubonic plague the prime culprits.<sup>113</sup> There is no mention of Erpingham as being affected by disease, but it is apparent the health of Lancaster’s army and his compatriots suffered mightily in the service of their lord during their stay in Iberia.

At this point in his campaign Lancaster decided to treat with King Juan of Castile. Militarily and financially, both men were being ruined by their conflict. In negotiations during the summer of 1387, the duke (and his wife Constance) agreed to renounce their claim to the throne, give their daughter Katherine to be married to Juan’s heir, and relinquish lands the English army was occupying in Galicia. In return, Lancaster received 600,000 gold francs and a promise from King Juan to release prisoners who were loyal to the duke. Lancaster had not been able to achieve his stated goal of capturing the crown of Castile, but the mission was not a total failure. Gaunt had removed himself from the poisonous atmosphere of English royal politics, ensured his daughter would become a queen, and received an enormous financial settlement for his troubles.<sup>114</sup>

What of Sir Thomas Erpingham and the 1386-87 expedition in Spain? It is impossible to declare with certainty his role in the campaign or what experience he gained that would have aided his later career. If he worked closely with the archers, then it is logical to assume that this was a prelude to his solid command performance at Agincourt. The Duke of Lancaster's operation included some sieges (none of which were

of significant duration), but Sir Thomas could have gained some experience for his later missions to Prussia and France. The absence of intense combat or protracted siege warfare should not be construed to mean Erpingham gained nothing of substance from his latest adventure. The Iberian expedition should be regarded as an enhancement of the military training and experience he had received in Scotland. Now close to thirty years-old, Sir Thomas was no longer a military neophyte, but a seasoned veteran of two campaigns.



## The Expeditions to the Continent and the Holy Land with Henry Bolingbroke

Sir Thomas Erpingham and most of the remnants of Gaunt's army left the Iberian Peninsula in September 1387.<sup>115</sup> The Duke of Lancaster went from Spain to France and did not return to England until November 1389.<sup>116</sup> In fact, Erpingham's entry in the Dictionary of National Biography and an independent timeline of his life, produced in Norwich in 1996 for a symposium on Sir Thomas' life by the Norfolk Heraldry Society, both skip from 1386 to 1390. The lack of large-scale English military activity during this period perhaps explains the absence of information on Erpingham.

It may be speculated that those four undocumented years saw Sir Thomas involved with the management of his estates and the interests of the town of Norfolk. It was also during this time, when Erpingham acted in his capacity as a servant of the Lancastrians, it was increasingly in concert with the Duke's oldest son, Henry Bolingbroke, Earl of Derby (1367-1413). Sir Thomas would forge a strong personal bond with Henry that would last throughout the latter's reign as king. Unlike John of Gaunt, who was seventeen years older than Sir Thomas and a possible father figure, Erpingham was roughly of the same generation as Bolingbroke; perhaps suggesting that the relationship between the earl and Erpingham was closer than the one that existed between the duke and Sir Thomas.

Henry, Earl of Derby was typical of most aristocratic men of the Medieval era in that he considered himself a chivalric warrior. He had shown early his military skill and was victorious in jousting tournaments as early as 1386. During the 1387-88 governmental crisis, in which a group of noblemen dubbed the Lords Appellant, upset at the influence of the 'duketti' at the king's council, attempted to take control of the

government. Derby emerged as one of the principal military commanders of the Appellants' forces. On December 20, 1387, Bolingbroke defeated the forces of King Richard's favorite, Robert de Vere, Duke of Ireland, at Radcot Bridge (in Oxfordshire). This defeat compelled King Richard to capitulate to the conditions of the Lords—one of which was the permanent exile of the Duke of Ireland.<sup>117</sup>

By 1390, Sir Thomas had joined Derby's retinue. Gaunt had provided Derby with substantial financial assistance for quite some time, and he allowed members of his own retinue to serve his son. According to one author, Erpingham's status was not uncommon:

movement between the households of father and son was common, but during the 1390s, [Gaunt] began to underwrite Derby's political position in a more systematic fashion by granting additional retaining fees to his son's servants, on condition that they remained with Derby after his own death.<sup>118</sup>

Apart from his father's aid, however, Henry was able to maintain a retinue of "thirteen knights, eighteen squires, three heralds, ten miners and engineers, six minstrels, and [men of] sixty other ranks."<sup>119</sup>

In March 1390, Henry of Derby went to France to participate in a jousting tournament at St. Inglevert (near Calais). Henry was victorious at the tournament and, while there, heard about a way to reinforce the military reputation he had just won. Derby was told about the struggle for Christendom that was raging in the Baltic countries (specifically Lithuania and Prussia) and, by May 1390, Henry had received permission to go to the Baltic from his father, the Duke of Lancaster, and his cousin, King Richard. The king even wrote several letters on Henry's behalf asking foreign royalty to aid the young earl on his journeys.<sup>120</sup>

By the late fourteenth century, Lithuania was a united country fighting to expand its territory into western Russia and fighting against the Teutonic Knights. The Knights frequently campaigned in an attempt to Christianize Lithuania, and their activities were a seasoning experience for knights who joined their expeditions from throughout Europe.<sup>121</sup> Once the Lithuanians adopted Christianity (in 1390), the Knights turned to dynastic politics for their *casus belli*. They aligned themselves with Lithuanian Prince Vitold against his cousin Skirgal—the Polish-installed governor of Lithuania—in a struggle over control of the government. Apparently Bolingbroke did not care (or possibly did not know) that the mission of the crusade had changed from religion to politics; the crusade was still a way to win “honour, reputation, and spiritual reward, all in a matter of weeks.”<sup>122</sup> The Earl of Derby obtained 3,500*l.* from John of Gaunt and mustered his retinue for the voyage to the Continent.<sup>123</sup>

The fighting in the Baltic was usually of two sorts: long campaigns with sieges and attempts at permanent conquest; or short, harassing raids (*chevauchées*) the real aim of which was terrorizing and plundering the inhabitants of a particular region.<sup>124</sup> Sir Thomas had experienced both of these kinds of war. During Lancaster’s 1386 campaign in Western Europe, Erpingham participated in four sieges (Brest, Orense, Valderas, and Villalobos). His expeditions to Scotland (1384 and 1385) involved small-scale plundering of towns and villages, the burning of forests and, when King Richard was in command, the destruction of Scottish monasteries.<sup>125</sup>

The flotilla containing the Earl of Derby, Sir Thomas Erpingham and 300 other men left the English port of Boston in July 1390 and landed at the Baltic port of Rixhöft (in Prussia) on August 8<sup>th</sup> [see map, page 81]. Moving by land, the expedition traveled in

an easterly direction through the towns of Danzig, Elbing, Braunsberg, and Brandenburg. Perhaps it was Bolingbroke's object that the English army should march near towns, thus remaining better supplied while at the same time avoiding the treacherous wilderness that characterized this part of the continent. The purpose of the *reyse* (the German equivalent of the *chevauchée*) was to rendezvous with the forces of the Teutonic Knights around Ragnit and campaign against their common enemy—Skirgal, Polish regent in Lithuania.<sup>126</sup>

Bolingbroke's force marched rapidly and by August 28<sup>th</sup> was at the Wilia River (an impressive total of over 300 miles in just thirty days). It was on that day that the English crusaders fought their sharpest engagement of the campaign. Forcing their way across a bridge that spanned the river, the earl's army killed an estimated 300 of their enemy and three Russian dukes. This contest has been called an "archer victory" and was yet another example of the superior skill of the English longbowmen. Prussian chroniclers recorded the good service of "*der herczoge von langkastel* [the Duke of Lancaster] and his archers."<sup>127</sup> Given what we know about Sir Thomas Erpingham's military training both as a youth and as a knight, he probably played a major part in the direction of the archers' efforts.<sup>128</sup>

Following the defeat of his forces, and pursued by Erpingham and the rest of Bolingbroke's forces, Skirgal retreated to a castle in the town of Vilna. Located on the Nerva River, this town was a "civilian settlement protected by at least two fortifications."<sup>129</sup> The outer fort was made of wood and was quickly captured on September 4<sup>th</sup>. The main castle, of more substantial construction, was well defended and well provisioned. It had been re-supplied by a barge via the river and reinforced by an

army from Livonia (modern-day Latvia). The English and Lithuanian armies besieged the castle for about four weeks with the English longbowmen again winning praise from their adversaries. The Crusaders, however, running short of powder, facing decimation by disease and the onset of the winter season, raised the siege and left the vicinity of Vilna on October 7<sup>th</sup>.<sup>130</sup>

The severity of the Eastern European winter prevented any further offensive military operations, so Henry marched his forces west to Königsberg where they went into winter quarters. The following Spring, the English army traveled to the Baltic port of Danzig where they boarded ships for the voyage back to England. On March 31, 1391, Sir Thomas Erpingham and the rest of Bolingbroke's army left Danzig and sailed back to England, landing at Hull on April 30<sup>th</sup>.<sup>131</sup>

Derby's crusade to the Baltic had failed in its political goal of putting Prince Vitold in charge of the Lithuanian government, but had provided further valuable military experience for Sir Thomas Erpingham—specifically in the areas of siege warfare and the commanding of archers. His employment in subsequent military campaigns is evidence that he had performed solidly during this latest campaign. Less than a year after his return (March 1, 1392), King Richard showed confidence in Erpingham's skills as he again named him a commissioner of array in Norfolk to organize against a threatened French invasion.<sup>132</sup>

Although a desire to enhance his reputation as a chivalric warrior fueled Henry Bolingbroke's second expedition to the Continent, the substance and duration were different. After again obtaining letters of protection from King Richard II, Henry's contingent left England from the port of Lynn on July 24, 1392. Disembarking at Leba

(in Pomerania), Bolingbroke's army marched to the port of Danzig, where it arrived on August 10<sup>th</sup> [see map, page 82].<sup>133</sup>

Perhaps because of his duties as commissioner of the array, Sir Thomas did not sail with Bolingbroke on this crossing. Erpingham was about a month behind, arriving in Danzig on September 22<sup>nd</sup>, bearing 360 Aragonese florins provided by the Duke of Lancaster. By then, however, Bolingbroke was no longer in Danzig. It appears there was some sort of conflict between Bolingbroke's forces and the Teutonic Knights. Sources indicate that some English soldiers killed a German citizen and "were so disorderly that the Teutonic knights were glad to get rid of [Henry's forces]." <sup>134</sup> Once it was apparent to Henry that his men would not be employed by the Knights, he sent most of his forces back to England. Erpingham caught up with Bolingbroke's reduced contingent and joined them at the Prussian town of Schonec. Derby, moreover, decided to keep Sir Thomas at his side while he remained on foreign soil. <sup>135</sup>

Indeed, Erpingham had become not only a member of Henry's inner-circle, but also one of his friends and most faithful servants. <sup>136</sup> Records kept by Bolingbroke's treasurer, Richard Kyngeston, record both the payment of Erpingham's wages and the non-military duties Henry assigned him, such as giving alms to the poor ("*elemosinis domini distributis pauperibus ad Modon in redeundo per manus Erpingham*"), securing horses, and purchasing various other supplies. <sup>137</sup> By the beginning of October, Erpingham and the rest of Bolingbroke's group had reached Frankfurt. This town was the starting point of an adventure that would lead Derby through Eastern and Southern Europe, to the Middle East, and back to England. <sup>138</sup>

Only two knights were part of the small contingent that went with Bolingbroke to the Holy Land, and apparently Erpingham was one of them. The small band of Englishmen, too few to constitute a military threat to anyone, traveled more as pilgrims and tourists than as warriors. A Venetian galley carried them to Jaffa. From there some of the group made their way to Jerusalem for a very short visit to the Holy Land—the apogee of any expedition for a chivalric knight during the Medieval period. Unfortunately, the records give no indication that Erpingham was in the party who went to Jerusalem. It is probable he stayed at the landing port of Jaffa.<sup>139</sup>

The expedition then left the Middle East and, after stopping in Cyprus, landed in Venice. From there, Henry and his troops marched through Milan, Pavia, and Paris. They finally arrived in England in July 1393. When Henry returned from the Holy Land in 1393 he was, as a result of his exploits overseas, a very popular figure in England. Although a figure of lesser stature, Sir Thomas Erpingham also might have seen his reputation enhanced.<sup>140</sup>

The expeditions and travels of these years provided the basis for “mutual loyalty between Henry and his knightly followers, many of whom served him long after the days in Prussia.”<sup>141</sup> Such an observation surely would have reflected upon Sir Thomas Erpingham, for his affiliation with the Earl of Derby had provided him with an opportunity to sharpen his military skills and to share in the excitement of the journey to the Holy Land. It seems probable that Erpingham's sense of loyalty to the House of Lancaster was reinforced by his travels with Henry and that the young earl had come to trust and rely on Sir Thomas. By the mid-1390s, Erpingham had served two generations

of Lancastrian lords and soon was asked to risk all that he possessed to help one of them seize the throne of England.<sup>142</sup>



## The Deposition of King Richard II

Like the period from 1386-1390, not much is known about the activities of Sir Thomas Erpingham from his return to England in 1393 until Bolingbroke's exile by King Richard II in 1398. There was an absence of military activity by Derby during this period, thus, contemporaneous sources and historians have focused their attention elsewhere. When Sir Thomas' name again becomes conspicuous in accounts of this period, it is because of Erpingham's prominence in one of the most controversial episodes in English history. He was one of Henry of Bolingbroke's principal supporters in the usurpation of the throne of Richard II in 1399. The events leading to the coronation of Henry IV are complex, but only certain ones need to be reviewed in this paper.

The chronicler Froissart states that "Derby was very popular, especially in London" and to some extent this enhanced standing was at the expense of King Richard.<sup>143</sup> The English monarch was unpopular because of an unpredictable disposition, an autocratic view of kingship, and a contemptible attitude towards other peoples' property.<sup>144</sup> The king, moreover, was having dynastic problems. His union with Anne of Bohemia (1366-1394) failed to produce any children and his marriage to Isabella of France (1389-1410) in 1396 never was consummated. In a situation such as this, a young, popular warrior such as Henry Bolingbroke, the father of several boys and throne-worthy because his grandfather was King Edward III, naturally was considered a potential rival. Henry also had the wealth of the Lancastrian duchy to support any attempt to claim the throne. Henry's status in England made King Richard jealous and apprehensive. The spark that ignited the events which led to Henry's exile was the

exchange of charges of treason between Bolingbroke and Thomas Mowbray, the Duke of Norfolk.<sup>145</sup>

In December 1397, according to Bolingbroke's account (the only account available)<sup>146</sup>, he was engaged in a conversation with Mowbray about their respective futures in England. Mowbray commented unfavorably about King Richard's fidelity as a friend and tried to convince Derby that he, Derby, and John of Gaunt were in some peril. Bolingbroke was told also that his Lancastrian inheritance was in jeopardy of being forfeited to the crown. John of Gaunt was used to hearing such things, but Bolingbroke was taken aback at the candor and temper of Mowbray's remarks. After their conversation, Henry informed his father of Norfolk's comments; he also told King Richard.<sup>147</sup>

Furious at Norfolk's remarks, the king told Henry to make public the conversation at the approaching Shrewsbury Parliament (January 1398). When the body convened, Bolingbroke produced a written synopsis of the conversation, the substance of which raised suspicions of treason. Norfolk was not present at Parliament, but was given fifteen days to answer the charges against him. The Parliament also established a committee to investigate the accusation of treason leveled by Bolingbroke, as it became apparent that neither man would admit that he was lying. Eventually, the king decided the only way the matter could be settled was "according to the law of chivalry" and thus a wager of battle was arranged.<sup>148</sup>

On September 16, 1398, the two men were set to do battle when, at the last moment, Richard put a halt to the duel. After deliberating for a couple of hours, the king

decided to banish Bolingbroke from England for 10 years (later reduced to six years after the intervention of the Duke of Lancaster) and to banish Norfolk for life.<sup>149</sup> According to Froissart, King Richard did

proclaim and command that our cousin the Earl of Derby,  
on the grounds that he angered us and is in some part the  
cause of [Mowbray's] offence and punishment, shall prepare  
to leave the kingdom...and to go to whatever place he chooses.”<sup>150</sup>

Bolingbroke was allowed, however, to appoint attorneys to oversee his Lancastrian estates. Richard promised also that Derby would inherit the entirety of these estates upon the death of John of Gaunt, should that occur during Henry's exile.<sup>151</sup>

Henry, Earl of Derby, left England, “amid the lamentations of the citizens of London” in early October 1398.<sup>152</sup> Erpingham was one of the handful of devoted Lancastrian retainers who accompanied him to France. Bolingbroke's sentence was surely a bitter blow to Sir Thomas. To follow his lord, Erpingham had left voluntarily the company of his wife, Joan Clopton, and put in peril all lands and honors he had inherited from his family and had won in the service of the House of Lancaster. Sir Thomas Erpingham turned over his lands to a group of twelve trustees charged with protecting and maintaining his possessions until such time as he could return to England.<sup>153</sup>

In some ways the decision to accompany the exiled Bolingbroke overseas was the most dangerous and potentially most costly decision Erpingham ever made. Unlike his previous journeys, Sir Thomas was not traveling abroad under the auspices of the English Crown, but rather as a faithful follower of someone exiled by the king. Erpingham's decision to follow his expelled lord “voluntarily” meant that he had chosen loyalty to Derby over loyalty to the English king.<sup>154</sup> Erpingham's thoughts about King Richard II's kingship have not been recorded by history, but one may surmise, by the way Gaunt and

Derby had been treated by Richard, that Sir Thomas' sense of loyalty towards his monarch did not compare to his devotion to the House of Lancaster and that he would welcome a chance to strike back at King Richard.

The exiled Earl of Derby traveled to France and was well-received by members of European royalty (who perhaps had heard of Henry's exploits in Prussia and journey to the Holy Land). Derby had offers to live in several different places, but decided to reside in Paris and see what developed in England.<sup>155</sup> King Richard was not popular at the French court (even though he was French King Charles VI's son-in-law) and it seems clear that Henry spent his time in France planning for the day when he could return to his native land. As one of his loyal lieutenants, Sir Thomas Erpingham, too, might well have been privy to Henry's thoughts, feelings, and plans about the proper time to sail across the Channel to England.

On February 3, 1399, at the age of fifty-nine, John of Gaunt, perhaps the most powerful non-monarch in fourteenth-century England, passed away at Leicester.<sup>156</sup> Unfortunately, history does not record the thoughts of Sir Thomas Erpingham about the passing away of his first lord and benefactor. It must have been a moment of great sadness for Sir Thomas and many of the other people in Derby's retinue who had been indentured to the great duke, fought in his campaigns but, under their current circumstances, could not even pay their respects by attending his funeral.

For Henry Bolingbroke, the death of his father meant the immense Lancastrian estates now belonged to him—if he were allowed to receive them as promised. Unfortunately, King Richard seized the opportunity presented to him by John of Gaunt's death to attempt to break the power of the House of Lancaster. Influenced by many in his

Council, the king viewed as a threat the wealth and influence made possible by the Lancastrian estates now belonging to Bolingbroke, a man whom the king “had never liked and whom, by this date, he almost certainly feared.”<sup>157</sup> On March 18, 1399, a parliamentary committee stripped Bolingbroke of the powers of attorney necessary to claim his inheritance and further declared that Henry was now banished from England for life and that the immense Lancastrian possessions were forfeit to the crown. King Richard then distributed the confiscated lands among his partisans.<sup>158</sup>

Once he heard of the confiscation of his inheritance, Bolingbroke accelerated his plans for a return to England. According to the *Chronique de Saint-Denys*, “[Henry] had already begun to think in terms of hostile action against the English king and his kingdom.”<sup>159</sup> Deprived of his principal source of income, Henry realized his ability to execute these plans had been imperiled by Richard’s actions. Among other things, he would be unable to pay his retainers (such as Sir Thomas Erpingham) the annuities granted to them in their indentures. There is no record of King Richard’s seizing the lands of the knights who accompanied Henry, but their salary from Henry was still a part of their annual income and needed to be maintained.

The Earl of Derby quickly sought allies who would actively or passively support him in his quest to reclaim his inheritance. Back when the term of his banishment had been for only six years, Henry had violated its conditions by communicating with the exiled Archbishop of Canterbury Thomas Arundel in France. Arundel had been archbishop from 1396 to 1397, but he too had fallen out of favor with King Richard and had been banished from England for life.<sup>160</sup> While it seems Henry would have been

interested in obtaining the aid of anyone who opposed Richard, the support of the exiled archbishop added a certain “spiritual power” to Bolingbroke’s return.

On June 17, 1399, Sir Thomas Erpingham was witness to the signing of a goodwill treaty that further augmented the growing coalition against King Richard. The parties to the agreement were Henry Bolingbroke and Louis, Duke of Orleans (brother of French King Charles VI). These men had much in common and their agreement to aid each other against their enemies was a natural one. Louis had discussed a proposed marriage arrangement between Henry and a daughter of one of the duke’s allies (the Duke of Berry). The Duke of Burgundy (the traditional enemy of the Orléanists) was an ally of King Richard and any eventuality that weakened Richard in England also weakened the Burgundians in France. Finally, Louis regarded as unjust the confiscation of Henry’s lands by Richard and the agreement pledged each to “help the other uphold his honour, estate, health, and well-being.”<sup>161</sup>

While Henry was plotting, King Richard, apparently unaware of the seriousness of his cousin’s designs, decided to campaign in Ireland. Henry had learned of the king’s intentions as a result of a letter sent by Richard to King Charles VI informing the latter of the Irish campaign.<sup>162</sup> Upon hearing the news of Richard’s movements (the king had entered Ireland on June 1, 1399), Henry began to make his final preparations to cross the Channel. Richard took most of his best commanders with him to Ireland and left the ineffectual Edmund, Duke of York (the uncle of Henry and Richard) as regent. Richard evidently felt secure on the throne, confident his destruction of the House of Lancaster was irreversible.<sup>163</sup>

The king's miscalculation of the impact of the confiscation of Earl Henry's inheritance would prove to be Richard's greatest blunder and possibly Derby's greatest weapon. What the king did by seizing Henry's inheritance was to strike fear in the hearts of all landowners in England. If King Richard could act arbitrarily (or through his sycophants) and steal the great lands of the House of Lancaster, then what would prevent him from doing so to lesser landowners? According to one author:

the denial to [Bolingbroke] of the Lancastrian inheritance was what made Henry's cause a just one. It was as the champion of property rights that he presented himself to the people of England between July and September 1399.<sup>164</sup>

Anxiety concerning Richard's land-grabbing was not confined to people living in England; it could be that Sir Thomas Erpingham and the others who accompanied Derby into exile were nervous about the fate of their lands, and their trepidations added urgency to their return to England.

Armed with news of the nobles' distress and Richard's departure to Ireland, Bolingbroke departed France from Boulogne. Erpingham was a member of Henry's force, the size of which has been estimated at anywhere from 55 to 300 men.<sup>165</sup> Henry demonstrated his fine military ability in executing his return to England. He sailed back and forth near the eastern coast of England searching for a landing point that would offer him the most surprise and the least resistance. There were diversionary movements by Henry's partisans in England (such as the capture of Pevensey castle in Sussex) that confused the Duke of York. Henry and "a little band of his faithful friends", landed at Ravenspur at the mouth of the Humber River in Yorkshire, on July 4, 1399. The earl's six-year exile had lasted just nine months.<sup>166</sup>

Once in England, Bolingbroke moved in a southwesterly fashion through the towns of Pickering, Knaresborough, Pontefract, Doncaster, Leicester, Gloucester and Bristol. The army then traveled north across the Welsh marches, finally stopping in the area around Chester. Facing no military opposition to his movements, Derby succeeded in convincing King Richard's regent to join his cause. According to one chronicler's account, on July 27<sup>th</sup>, Bolingbroke met with his uncle, the Duke of York, at Berkeley (fifteen miles north of Bristol) and convinced him to abandon the king.<sup>167</sup> Sir Thomas Erpingham was present at this meeting.<sup>168</sup>

Henry's progress forced Richard to return from Ireland. The king chose to return through Wales and raise an army of Welshmen to defend his crown. This act did not endear him to his English subjects, many of whom were embracing Bolingbroke's cause. Richard eventually was deserted by all but a few men and, under disguise as a priest, made his way to Conway Castle in Wales. Any attempt to raise an army there was thwarted by the presence of Bolingbroke's forces at nearby Chester and the fact that recent events had proved there were few men who remained loyal to Richard.<sup>169</sup>

On or about August 10<sup>th</sup>, a delegation from Henry, which did not include Sir Thomas Erpingham, went to visit Richard in the castle with a proposal from Bolingbroke. The Lancastrian representatives promised the king he could keep his crown if only he would restore Henry's inheritance, call a parliament, and surrender five of his councilors to be tried. Richard, without an army and seemingly without friends, accepted Henry's conditions. One of the negotiators sent by Bolingbroke, the Earl of Northumberland, convinced King Richard to leave Conway to have a face-to-face meeting with Henry. On



August 16, 1399, Richard left the castle on a journey that was supposed to take him to see the Earl of Derby. The king never arrived.<sup>170</sup>

While on his way from Conway to Chester, Richard was taken prisoner near Flint (about halfway between the above two places) in an ambush arranged by the Earl of Northumberland, and with men led by Sir Thomas Erpingham. According to the French author of *Chronique de la Traïson et Mort de Richart Deux Roy D'Engleterre* (a contemporaneous account of King Richard's deposition), the king was walking down the side of a mountain when he perceived that he was about to be made a prisoner. As Northumberland was explaining to Richard that he was, indeed, about to be taken into custody, "Erpingham came up with all the people of the earl, his trumpets sounding aloud. The king...then saw well enough that they had been betrayed." When Richard was placed in Flint Castle, Sir Thomas was placed in command of the Lancastrian forces guarding the castle.<sup>171</sup>

Due to Sir Thomas Erpingham's participation in these events, fourteenth-century historians began to mention him regularly and prominently in their works. The French writer of the *Chronique de la Traïson* noted Sir Thomas' activities quite often; Erpingham is declared a "famous and excellent knight" in monk Thomas Walsingham's account of the deposition of Richard<sup>172</sup>; John Capgrave's *Chronicle of England* also made Sir Thomas an integral part of his account; and the author of *Historia Vitae et Regni Ricardi Secundi* placed Erpingham squarely in Henry's inner-circle.<sup>173</sup>

The general tenor of their remarks was that Sir Thomas Erpingham was a knight in whom Bolingbroke could place his trust. Asking a member of your retinue to command troops whose task it was to arrest the King of England required complete

confidence in that commander. By serving the Lancastrian family interests faithfully for almost twenty years, Erpingham had demonstrated he could be trusted with this crucial assignment, and historians living in the fourteenth century noted this fact.

Some chroniclers during the period, like those of other periods, were influenced by the politics and circumstances of the era in which they wrote. Capgrave's account of the fifteenth century has a tint of anti-Lancastrian bias. Another source regarded as hostile to the usurpation of Henry Bolingbroke is *Chronique de la Traison et Mort de Richart Deux Roy D'Engleterre*. The author of the *Chronique* is unknown, but is suspected of being a French monk whose work is a "propagandist tract written in France lamenting Richard's fate and seeking to stir the French nobility into action against [Henry]."<sup>174</sup> Walsingham, however, has been praised as full of "good information...and trustworthy."<sup>175</sup>

Henry Bolingbroke and King Richard II met at Flint Castle. According to one account, Bolingbroke reaffirmed his desire only to have his "life, lands, and inheritance" restored to him. The king replied, "you may have back all that is yours in peace and without difficulty."<sup>176</sup> The two men traveled from Flint through Chester arriving in London on September 2<sup>nd</sup>. Perceiving that their monarch was in danger, some of Richard's partisans made some unsuccessful attempts to remove the king from Henry's company. As one of the men trusted with guarding Richard, Sir Thomas Erpingham would have been instrumental in defeating these plots.<sup>177</sup>

It is hard to discern when Henry decided the restoration of his Lancastrian inheritance would not be satisfactory and that only the throne of England would satisfy him. Mary Louise Bruce, whose biography of Derby is titled "The Usurper King",

considers him “no reluctant usurper...a crafty dissembler, carefully making his plans to seize his cousin’s throne.”<sup>178</sup> Another biographer claims that Bolingbroke’s ambition changed the size and scope of his mission in England. “Doubtless [the Earl of Derby] coveted the crown for himself; at the same time he knew that the only way to reform the government of the country was under a new monarch.”<sup>179</sup> Kingly ambition, plus a desire for revenge for his treatment (and that of his father) at the hands of Richard II, and the fact that the king had proven himself to be less than trustworthy during his reign certainly seem among the valid explanations for Henry’s change of heart.

Once in London, Sir Thomas Erpingham’s role in Bolingbroke’s scheme to remove King Richard from the throne only intensified. With Richard a prisoner in the Tower of London, it appears Sir Thomas was the first man specifically charged with his custody. While the king was in Erpingham’s keeping, Bolingbroke and a delegation of Lancastrian supporters (including Sir Thomas, Thomas Arundel, and the Earl of Northumberland) presented to Richard a written instrument of abdication. The king read the document and, in the presence of the same men, agreed to its stipulations the next day, September 29, 1399.<sup>180</sup>

It was deemed necessary that the instrument of abdication be ratified by Parliament, so on September 30<sup>th</sup> Parliament met at Westminster. As Henry Bolingbroke entered the Hall, he was proceeded by “Sir Thomas Erpingham...carrying [Henry’s] splendidly decorated and bejeweled sword.”<sup>181</sup> The assembly at Westminster voted to depose Richard as king and accepted Derby’s claim to the throne. Also, Sir Thomas Erpingham was one of the proctors appointed by Parliament who, on October 1<sup>st</sup>, communicated to Richard Parliament’s assent to the sentence of deposition. The

sentence renounced for “all the estates of the realm” all homage done for the former king.<sup>182</sup> Henry was crowned on October 13<sup>th</sup>. Erpingham was one of eleven men who advocated to King Henry IV that the former King Richard II be executed. Richard, who reputedly was starved, died in early February 1400.<sup>183</sup>

When Richard’s partisans, the ‘duketti’, subsequently rose in rebellion, Erpingham was one of the leaders of the armed force that successfully suppressed them. He was one of two commanders of a vanguard of “four thousand archers and two hundred lances” that shadowed the movements of the duketti’s forces.<sup>184</sup> Sir Thomas also was named to the post of commissioner of the array (one in which he had plenty of experience) for the county of Kent as a precaution against possible French intervention against the usurpation.<sup>185</sup>

After Richard’s partisans were defeated, Erpingham was appointed by Henry to try the duketti for all treasons and felonies committed during their attempt to overthrow the new dynasty.<sup>186</sup> It was during the trial (at Oxford) of one of the leaders of the duketti, Sir Thomas Blount, that Erpingham was the target of a stinging condemnation for his support for Henry’s usurpation. As Blount’s “bowels were being burnt before his eyes”, Erpingham tried to obtain from him the names of other members of the duketti. Blount’s reply represented the venomous last gasp of a condemned man:

art thou the traitor Erpingham? Thou art more false than  
I am or ever was; and thou liest, false knight as thou art;  
for, by the death which I must suffer, I never spake ill of  
any knight...but thou utteredst thy false spleen like a false  
and disloyal traitor...cursed be the hour when thou was  
born!<sup>187</sup>

Sir Thomas’ loyalty during these past momentous months was amply rewarded by the new king, Henry IV. Erpingham’s rewards included offices, titles, and grants; all

increased his personal net worth, prestige, and loyalty to the Lancastrian regime. The new Lancastrian king again was demonstrating great confidence in the abilities of Erpingham.<sup>188</sup>

In September 1399, Erpingham was installed as Constable of Dover Castle—an assignment of vital military importance—especially considering the expected hostile French attitude toward the deposition of Richard II (the king was married to the daughter of French King Charles VI).<sup>189</sup> A massive structure, Dover Castle guarded the sea-lanes of the eastern English Channel and the closest point between England and France. Sir Thomas was instructed to effect repairs to the castle’s “walls, turrets...arms, armour, bows, crossbows, and other artillery.”<sup>190</sup>

In November of that same year, Sir Thomas was named Warden of the Cinque Ports (comprised of Dover, Hastings, Hythe, Romsey, and Sandwich) in southern England. These ports provided the crown with its permanent fleet in return for certain privileges. Erpingham’s new post also increased his political prestige as he was responsible for choosing two barons from each of the Cinque Ports to attend Parliament.<sup>191</sup>

As king, Henry put his trust in the same men who had served him so faithfully while Earl of Derby; many of these were in John of Gaunt’s retinue and were now serving their second generation of Lancastrian men. Knights like John Norbury and Thomas Rempston, who, like Erpingham, had shared Bolingbroke’s exile in France, were rewarded with the offices of treasurer and steward, respectively. Other devotees of Lancaster were rewarded with offices and grants of land: John Payn was made butler of Bolingbroke’s household; John Winter was controller of the household of the future

Henry V; Sir John Strange was named controller of the royal household. There are several more examples of men just like this, who, through their displays of loyalty to Gaunt and Bolingbroke, saw their wealth and prominence increase considerably after 1399.<sup>192</sup>

Consolidating the new king's strength in the counties, which had not all favored his cause, was essential to Henry IV's keeping of the Crown, and Erpingham was the man the king used to buttress his support in Norfolk. Sir Thomas was granted the constablership of Henry's castle at Framingham (and some surrounding parks). In 1399 and 1401, he was named commissioner of the peace in Norfolk.<sup>193</sup> Sir Thomas used his political friends in Parliament (who were reportedly many) and his impeccable local reputation as a landowner and a warrior to crush any opposition to the Lancastrian usurpation.<sup>194</sup>

Erpingham's monetary rewards were quick and frequent in coming. His post as Constable of Dover Castle and Warden of the Cinque Ports carried with it considerable "fees, profits, and commodities." He was granted free lodging in a nearby town when the king was in London. Sir Thomas was given a subsidy from the port of Bishop's Lynn. In 1400, he received "for his good and gratuitous service" 80*l.* yearly from Norfolk and Suffolk and 40*l.* yearly from the town of Norwich.<sup>195</sup> Sir Thomas was one of five men who were "committed...to the keeping of two-thirds of all the lordships, demesnes, castles, towns...lands, parks, [*etc.*]" of the late Roger Mortimer, son of Lionel, Duke of Clarence, son of Edward III.<sup>196</sup> In 1410, Erpingham received a pardon from Henry IV for "all debts, account-arrears, fines, issues, amercements, reliefs, escheates, wards, marriages, and demands in the time of Richard II."<sup>197</sup> Sir Thomas acquisition of wealth

even reached the point where he was able to loan money to King Henry.<sup>198</sup> Even when, early in Henry's reign, Parliament criticized the new king for being over-generous in his grants, Sir Thomas Erpingham was specifically exempted from its censure.<sup>199</sup>

After Richard's abdication was made valid by Parliament, Erpingham was made chamberlain of the King Henry's household. Erpingham's tenure was during a period when laymen began to assume greater importance in the administration of the England.<sup>200</sup> "The chamberlain's bills he signed show Erpingham was a great deal at court in these early years. He attended [the King's] Council occasionally, so rarely for a man of his prominence that it seems probable he did not like the work."<sup>201</sup> If this truly was the case, then Sir Thomas is like most soldiers who find 'desk duty' to be tedious and not at all the thrill that characterizes military campaigning.

Erpingham was now styled in the *Calendar of Patent Rolls* as 'king's knight'. "In all probability, [king's knight] was an honorific title without fixed duties or emoluments ; but it possibly implied a special availability for the king's service which perhaps marks off its recipients from their fellow captains."<sup>202</sup> In 1400, King Henry bestowed upon Sir Thomas the very prestigious Order of the Garter. From 1403 to 1404, Erpingham was a member of Henry IV's Privy Council (the name given to the governing body of the realm whose members were the great officers of the state and royal household). During the summer of 1404, he served as steward of the royal household for a brief time.<sup>203</sup>

Despite his new-found national prominence and responsibilities, Erpingham remained keenly interested in the affairs of his hometown.<sup>204</sup> Norwich, the chief town in Norfolk and one in which Erpingham had connections and interests, had failed in its previous attempts to obtain a charter from Richard II authorizing it to elect a mayor. The

landing of Henry of Bolingbroke gave the city's inhabitants new hope, and they rallied around the usurper. In fact, in July 1399, leaders of the town wrote to Bolingbroke and declared openly for him. During this time, Henry, probably influenced by Erpingham, promised Norwich its charter if it was ever in his power to do so.<sup>205</sup>

Part of the reason for Norwich's benevolence toward Henry's cause was that his family's immense Lancastrian lands were geographically close to the East Anglian town and that John of Gaunt had promoted the interests of Norwich at court. "During 1399-1400, Norwich lavished gifts upon Sir Thomas Erpingham [and his wife] for bearing his good word to the King for the honour of the city and for having his counsel." The first Lancastrian king kept his word—Norwich was granted its charter in 1404.<sup>206</sup>

The reign of Henry IV was one of tumult in foreign relations and agitation at home. Despite the defeat of the 'duketti', Henry still had to contend with threats to his kingship. The Scots, the Welsh, and a prominent English family, the Percies, all tried to undo the results of 1399. In each case, Henry mustered an army and engaged in military action to strengthen his hold on the throne. He marched into Scotland in 1400 and vanquished the Percies at the battle of Shrewsbury in 1404. The king gradually diminished (through a series of small victories) the threat posed by the famed Welsh patriot, Owen Glendower.<sup>207</sup>

The historical record of Sir Thomas Erpingham's participation in these military events is somewhat dim. Sir Thomas accompanied one of Henry IV's younger sons to Ireland in 1401 and apparently did not return until 1403.<sup>208</sup> We do know that he was made Marshal of England during the "Coventry Parliament" in 1404, but no evidence indicates he was involved in any campaigning.<sup>209</sup> Marshal was a post whose prime



responsibilities were with the cavalry. It was a position that evolved from one within the royal household, to the wider responsibilities assigned by Parliament, and whose military duty it was to “[look] after horses...provide them with fodder, and may as a result have wider responsibilities in war for organising supplies.”<sup>210</sup> Erpingham was also a witness to the agreement signed between King Henry and Henry Percy, Earl of Northumberland, in August 1404.<sup>211</sup>

In 1398, Sir Thomas Erpingham voluntarily left England in the company of his lord, Henry Bolingbroke, to demonstrate his loyalty and gratitude to the family who had made him a knight. His return in 1399, ostensibly to help Henry claim his rightful inheritance, resulted in the capture of King Richard II and the installation of Derby as King Henry IV—and in both of these events Sir Thomas played a conspicuous part. It would be under the new king’s son Henry V, however, that Erpingham would acquire enduring fame near a small village in France named Agincourt.

## Sir Thomas Erpingham, King Henry V, and the Agincourt Campaign

On March 20, 1413, King Henry IV died after fourteen years on the throne. The influence of the first Lancastrian king on the life of Sir Thomas Erpingham had been immense. Henry's assumption of the crown in 1399 brought Sir Thomas increased lands, crown appointments, and a heightened prominence among men in early fifteenth-century England. Erpingham repaid his sovereign, as he had John of Gaunt, with complete loyalty and absolute dedication to serving the interests of the House of Lancaster. After Henry's death, his eldest son, Henry of Monmouth, ascended to the throne as King Henry V (1413-1422).

One of the circumstances that secured the Lancastrian usurpation of the throne, and would further the interests of its monarch, was the presence of the immense retinue whose genesis lay with John of Gaunt, passed to Henry of Bolingbroke, and continued in the service of Henry V. They were "a body of loyal supporters committed to [the Lancastrian cause and were] essential in maintaining kingship in fifteenth-century England."<sup>212</sup>

Sir Thomas enjoyed a close relationship with the sons of Henry Bolingbroke. In the summer of 1401, Erpingham accompanied Thomas, Duke of Clarence (Henry IV's second son) to Ireland after the latter had been named lieutenant of that country.<sup>213</sup> It was to be an ill-fated mission in which the Duke of Clarence would run out of money, be unable to pay his retainers, and see the expedition end in 1403. There are no historical records, however, to dispute the fact that Sir Thomas was one of the knights who remained loyal to Clarence to the end.<sup>214</sup>

Erpingham also developed a close relationship with King Henry IV's eldest son, Henry of Monmouth. In 1401, he was nominated (although not chosen) for the post of Henry's governor.<sup>215</sup> In 1407, while acting as a negotiator in peace discussions with France, Erpingham was one of the people chosen by Monmouth to discuss the arrangements for the proposed marriage of Monmouth to the daughter of the French king.<sup>216</sup>

In February 1409, Erpingham voluntarily relinquished his prestigious posts as Warden of the Cinque Ports and Constable of Dover Castle to young Prince Henry of Monmouth in return for an annuity of £100.<sup>217</sup> There is also circumstantial evidence that Sir Thomas supported Prince Henry during the latter's disputes with King Henry IV during the political and diplomatic crises of 1410-1412 involving royal officials and an assistance treaty with the Armagnacs. The relationship between these two events has been the subject of much speculation by historians.<sup>218</sup>

King Henry V was twenty-six years old when he ascended the throne of England in 1413. Sir Thomas Erpingham was fifty-six, with thirty-three years of experience in English warfare and Lancastrian politics. Henry V's appointment of Erpingham as steward of the royal household (a scant three days after his coronation) is evidence that the young king had confidence in him and that he probably wanted him nearby to provide seasoned counsel. "The steward of England...according to popular tradition, [was] the first officer of state in the kingdom."<sup>219</sup> The steward was an officer of the crown who was primarily responsible for financial and judicial matters. Erpingham served Henry in this capacity from 1413 to 1417.<sup>220</sup> It was also during the reign of Henry V that Sir

Thomas began to be styled as “knight banneret” in the records of the period. A knight banneret was a “knight of outstanding note, usually with a military background.”<sup>221</sup>

The reign of Henry V is dominated by the events involving his renewal of the Hundred Years War with France. The set-piece battles that characterized the war during the reign of Edward III (1327-1377) had given way to French raids against English occupied territory in France and retaliatory *chevauchées* by English armies. The last decades of the fourteenth century witnessed much of the territory that had been won by England in the treaty of Brétigny (1360), which had ended the first phase of the war, being recaptured by France.<sup>222</sup>

King Henry V was determined to defend and enlarge his holdings in France. Successful campaigning in France would have a two-fold reward: it would secure the territorial holdings of the Crown and it would strengthen Henry’s position as king. Despite the victories won by Henry IV, the nature of Bolingbroke’s usurpation meant there would always be persons looking to topple the embryonic Lancastrian dynasty. According to one historian, “Henry V’s claim to the throne was unsteady and he was faced with some strife in England. But, he decided to buttress his claim to the throne by asserting the [English crown’s] rights wherever they were—including France.”<sup>223</sup> Indeed, as Duke of Aquitaine (Henry was appointed to that position by his father in 1399), the new king had an obligation to protect English-held lands in France.<sup>224</sup>

King Henry demanded that France relinquish Normandy to him, and that other lands given to England in the treaty of Brétigny be returned to him and that he hold these lands in full sovereignty. The king also demanded the remainder of the ransom promised for King John II in the treaty of Brétigny (about 1.6 million French *écus*). Henry also

renewed the somewhat dormant claim of the English kings to the throne of France— something not pressed by Richard II or Henry IV. Furthermore, King Henry demanded that any settlement between the monarchs of England and France on these matters should be sealed by his proposed marriage to Katharine, another daughter of French King Charles VI (1380-1422).<sup>225</sup>

King Charles of France was in difficult straits. His country was split by bitter fighting over lands and privileges between rival cadet branches of the French royal family, the House of Orléans (known as Armagnacs) and the House of Burgundy. The squabbling was made worse by the inability of King Charles, who suffered periodic bouts of madness, to exercise steady control over his kingdom. The French, hemmed in on all sides by potential enemies, agreed to pay the remainder of John's ransom due the English, and to the grant of an enlarged Aquitaine in full sovereignty on the condition that Henry V surrender his claim to the French throne. The English king refused their proposal.<sup>226</sup>

Henry V's ambitions in France were tempered somewhat by turmoil in his own realm. In July 1415, just a few weeks before he left for France, Henry was blindsided by an assassination scheme, known as the "Southampton Plot", hatched by one of his former associates. The king was warned of the plot in time for him to order a ruthless punishment. Sir Thomas Erpingham was appointed a commission of oyer and terminer (a commission appointed by the king to hear cases regarding the crown that involved the breaking of the king's peace) and presided over the trial of the principals in Southampton in August 1415.<sup>227</sup> The convicted were executed, and certain of their lands were forfeited. As in the unsteady early years of Henry IV's reign, Sir Thomas was chosen by

the king to punish enemies of the House of Lancaster. Plagued by political problems at home, Henry looked to a military expedition on the Continent to secure his hold on the English throne.<sup>228</sup>

As preparations for the English invasion of France began to take shape, Sir Thomas Erpingham's military involvement with his Lancastrian lords was about to extend into its third generation. It had been thirty-five years since he had been indentured into John of Gaunt's retinue, and in that time Sir Thomas had campaigned in Scotland, Spain, Prussia, Lithuania, and traveled throughout Europe and into the Holy Land in the service of the House of Lancaster. This invasion, however, would be his first military expedition to France, and his role in it would be larger than any others in which he had participated. Given his prominence in the royal household and his vast military experience, it is virtually certain Sir Thomas participated in the war councils that formulated the strategy for Henry V's invasion of France.

In addition to the Sir Thomas' valuable experience in military combat, he also had to perform duties commensurate with his post as Henry's steward. Those duties included the procuring of funds and the purchasing of equipment (*i.e.*, arrows, horses, ships, *etc.*) that were needed for King Henry's invasion. Erpingham also would have directed the concentration of these supplies in the Channel ports from which King Henry intended to sail. He also would have had supervisory duties within the king's household.

In an era where life expectancy was far less than today's, Sir Thomas Erpingham, an almost sixty year-old man, was about to embark on yet another military campaign. Besides the combat risks, Erpingham's age made him more susceptible to death from diseases such as dysentery and the bubonic plague. Nonetheless, his seasoning as a

Medieval knight can be assumed to have made his presence vital in the eyes of King Henry. Luckily for Sir Thomas, the technology of war had not changed much since his first military excursions with John of Gaunt in the 1380s. The longbow was still the most feared implement of war in the English arsenal and Erpingham's ability to maximize the effectiveness of this weapon would make him indispensable and eventually famous during Henry's campaign in France.

The first objective of the invasion was the capture of Harfleur in Normandy. This port was chosen for several reasons. Harfleur was the largest, busiest port in Normandy and was fundamental to holding the duchy. During the early years of Henry V's reign, Harfleur had been a launching point for many French naval expeditions to assist rebellious activities in Scotland and Wales, and for French raids on English towns. Finally, leaving the town uncaptured would have violated the military principle that an advancing army should not leave an unconquered citadel in its rear. An unconquered Harfleur could have been used as a base so to allow the French to strike at the heels of Henry's invading army.<sup>229</sup> According to one historian who wrote about Henry's campaign:

If Henry V could conquer a port within striking distance of Paris, he would have gone a long way towards overcoming the disadvantages of his supply lines and of fighting in a country where he possessed no strongholds and the enemy possessed so many.<sup>230</sup>

The invasion force of 1,500 ships sailed from England on August 10<sup>th</sup> and reached Harfleur on August 13<sup>th</sup>. King Henry V's invading army was enormous by Medieval standards. Estimates put it at around 11,000 troops, 2,500 of whom were men-at-arms, with the rest being mounted and foot archers.<sup>231</sup> In a statistic that demonstrates the

increased fortune and prominence of Sir Thomas Erpingham, it is reported that *his* retinue “consisted of two knights, seventeen squires, and sixty archers.”<sup>232</sup>

Immediately upon reaching Harfleur, Henry began to besiege the town. He had taken care to bring the proper siege equipment, which not destroyed the town walls, but also wreaked havoc as a psychological weapon. It appears that Sir Thomas was in command of the archers during the siege as it is reported that “Erpingham’s archers were used to great effect at Harfleur.”<sup>233</sup> The best ally of Harfleur’s defenders (and perhaps also its worst enemy as it did not discriminate among its victims) was disease; dysentery ravaged Henry’s army. The casualty figures are estimated at 4,000 men.<sup>234</sup>

Harfleur’s only hope was that a French force would arrive and relieve the siege. In an act that demonstrated his devotion to chivalric code, Henry V allowed Frenchmen to leave the town so they could ask the king or the dauphin (the latter being the French equivalent to the Prince of Wales) to come to their aid. On September 22, 1415, with no attempt to lift the siege imminent, the town capitulated to King Henry.<sup>235</sup> According to the fifteenth-century English chronicler John Capgrave, Sir Thomas was one of the negotiators for Harfleur’s surrender:

the duke of Clarens spak for hem to the Kyng; and the Kyng sent to hem the erle of Dorset and Ser Thomas Erpingham to knowe her desire.

the Duke of Clarence spoke for [Harfleur's commanders] to the king; and the king sent to them the Earl of Dorset and Sir Thomas Erpingham to know their desire.<sup>236</sup>

Henry was now faced with a common military dilemma—what to do next. Time was running short for Henry as the Southampton Plot, the siege of Harfleur, and the stabilizing the administration of the port had upset his timetable of conquest. It was now



the last week of September and the wretched autumn campaigning season, characterized by fierce winds, constant rain, and muddy roads, was confronting the English army. The king had several alternatives: he could stay in Harfleur and consolidate his position there; he could leave the Continent and return to England; or he could march from Normandy to Calais (as his great-grandfather, Edward III had done in 1347) and depart France from that point.<sup>237</sup>

King Henry chose the last option since the prevalence of disease rendered staying at Harfleur untenable. It is also not clear that the ships that had transported the English army to France were still close to the French port. England was a commercial trading nation, and could not withstand the continued absence of the 1,500 ships Henry had used to transport his army across the Channel. Calais was an English possession in France, and Henry perhaps was concerned with its safety against a retaliatory attack by French forces. Once there, the king's army could be shipped back to England. It is not known what Sir Thomas Erpingham thought of the King Henry's decision, but it is recorded that the "large majority" of Henry's military advisors, conceivably because of the depleted numbers in the English army, argued against the march.<sup>238</sup>

The journey to Calais began at the end of the first week of October. Due to deaths incurred during the siege of Harfleur, and the necessity of leaving troops at the port to garrison the town, Henry had about 5,700 men with him during this *chevauchée*. Soon after the march began, the English discovered they were being shadowed by a French army (under the command of renowned French Marshal Jean Boucicaut). By October 12<sup>th</sup> it became known that the ford by which Henry had hoped to cross the Somme River had been captured by another French army that was patrolling the right bank of the river.

It was not until October 19<sup>th</sup> that the English were able to secure a crossing of the Somme (at Béthencourt and Voyennes).<sup>239</sup>

At this point it was apparent that King Henry's army was not going to be allowed to leave France without giving battle (reversing years of French military tactics). In fact, on October 20<sup>th</sup>, heralds of the marshals commanding the French armies had given Henry notice to this effect. By the evening of October 24<sup>th</sup>, the English and French armies were within striking distance of each other near the small village of Agincourt. Since it had become too dark to fight, the English spent the stormy night confessing to priests and wondering how their small, starving army could prevail over the enormous French army before them (estimated at 3,000 crossbowmen, 5,000 mounted and 12,000 dismounted men-at-arms), and feeling the cold sting of King Henry's order that no fires be lit.<sup>240</sup>

Sir Thomas Erpingham was to gain lasting fame on St. Crispin's Day, October 25, 1415. Described by the contemporaneous French chronicler Enguerrand de Monstrelet as a "knight grown grey with age and honour", Sir Thomas was ordered by King Henry V to arrange the English soldiers and archers in battle formation.<sup>241</sup> Calling on a lifetime of experience in archery tactics, Erpingham placed his longbowmen on the flanks of the English battleline, advanced them to the effective firing range of 200 yards from the French army, and ordered them to place sharpened stakes in front of their position so to protect them from the expected French cavalry charges.<sup>242</sup> Sir Thomas deployed the archers in front and the men-at-arms behind them. On his mount, Erpingham then gave a short, stirring speech in which he exhorted the army to "do well for their king and begged them to fight vigorously against the French in order to secure and save their own lives."<sup>243</sup>

Seeing that the French had not advanced towards the English, Erpingham marched the English army closer to the French line of battle. When he decided the French army was within striking distance for his archers, Sir Thomas lifted his baton and, crying *N'estroque!* (French, *estroque*, "to strike with the point of"), threw his baton in the air as the signal for the loosing of the arrows.<sup>244</sup> The effect of their volley was devastating. As the French began to charge the English line, they were forced through a patch of woods that effected a narrowing of the battlefield. This gave the longbowmen a bulging mass at which to aim; soon it became almost impossible to miss. As the archers began their deadly work, Erpingham took his place beside King Henry. During the course of the battle, some of the French knights were able to get close to the person of the king (who was struck on his helmet at some point during the melee), but Henry was saved by his own military skill and by the knights of his household—including Sir Thomas Erpingham.<sup>245</sup>

Agincourt has been recorded as a spectacular English victory. King Henry's army suffered only a few hundred casualties, while French losses are estimated at 8,000 men. Once again, just as at Crécy and Poitiers, the English were able to overcome their enormous numerical inferiority to crush the French in pitched battle. This victory would mark the beginning of a series of English triumphs during Henry's reign that would result in France's humiliation in the Treaty of Troyes (1420). According to its terms, Charles VI surrendered large tracts of land in France, betrothed his daughter Katherine to Henry, and made the English king his legal heir in place of the dauphin.<sup>246</sup>

Henry V and the rest of the triumphant army returned to England in November 1415. Upon his return Sir Thomas Erpingham presented the Exchequer with a claim for

money so that he could be reimbursed for the pay of the soldiers he had mustered for the invasion of France. In all there were two knights, seventeen esquires, and seventy-nine other soldiers for whom he requested payment. As a result of Erpingham's faithful service to his lords, his ability to assist the Lancastrian cause had grown immensely since 1380.<sup>247</sup>

As a young boy in Norwich, Sir Thomas surely listened to the stories of the legendary victories of King Edward III and the Black Prince in the fields of France. Upon returning to England, Erpingham would have his own stories to tell about bloodshed and glory won in the service of the House of Lancaster. He had entered the service of John of Gaunt at age 23. Now fifty-eight years old, Sir Thomas Erpingham was at the side of his original lord's grandson, King Henry V, as the English army won its greatest victory of the Middle Ages.

## Conclusion

Agincourt marked the end of Sir Thomas' active military service (remaining steward of the royal household until May 1417, Erpingham also served as an ambassador during negotiations with John the Fearless, Duke of Burgundy in 1416).<sup>248</sup> Sir Thomas lived the rest of his life in Norfolk and was not a participant in Henry V's later invasions of France.

During his retirement, Erpingham tended to the business of his numerous estates throughout East Anglia. Sir Thomas also certainly supervised the construction of the still-standing "Erpingham Gate" located on the west side of the Norwich Cathedral. A magnificent structure, it is evidence (as were his travels to Prussia with Bolingbroke) of the Christian devotion not only of Erpingham, but of the knightly class whose task it was to honor God and their lords. In 1419, Sir Thomas also donated the money for the glazing of the east chancel window of the Convent of the Austin Friars (now St. Andrew's Hall) in Norwich.<sup>249</sup>

Sir Thomas Erpingham died on June 27, 1428 at the age of seventy-one. He had no children by either of his wives and in his will left the bulk of his estate to Sir William Phelip, son of his sister Julian.<sup>250</sup> It is perhaps because he left no issue that Erpingham is regarded as only a minor figure in English medieval history. If he had fathered children who had either added to the Erpingham lands or fought in the subsequent wars of the fifteenth century, then Sir Thomas' life and career might be the subject of much greater historical scrutiny. Instead, no descendant of Sir Thomas would be around to participate in the incredible reversal of fortune by France during the later-stages of the Hundred Years War or fight in the Wars of the Roses.

The fact that Sir Thomas never was elevated to a peerage is conceivably another reason why his life has not been chronicled more fully. Edward III and Richard II were both very generous in their creation of peers. Their generosity, and especially the ill-repute of Richard II's 'duketti', seemed to have provoked an aversion to creating new peers among the Lancastrians. Henry IV, for instance, created only three new peers—all of whom were members of the royal family.<sup>251</sup> If the first two Lancastrian kings had been as generous as the last two Plantagenet kings, then Sir Thomas could have received a peerage and a more prominent place in English history.

Given the attitude of Henry IV and Henry V regarding the creation of peerages, one must place even stronger emphasis on the awarding to Sir Thomas Erpingham of the Order of the Garter. If these Lancastrian kings were going to refrain from creating peers outside the royal family, then what would be the highest honor, even more than lands and governmental appointments, left to bestow upon their most loyal followers? In fact, Henry IV bestowed the honor on only one other member of his retinue—Sir Thomas Rempston in (May 1400). Erpingham's influence and reputation was perhaps the reason that his nephew and heir, Sir William Phelip, received the Order from King Henry V in November 1418.<sup>252</sup> The Garter, therefore, should be seen as the Lancastrian equivalent of a peerage and even more evidence of the importance of Sir Thomas in early-fifteenth century England.

Erpingham worked assiduously to promote the interests of Norfolk and Norwich; as such it would be in these places that Sir Thomas would be most fondly remembered. According to historian Trevor John, "Erpingham's local reputation was such that

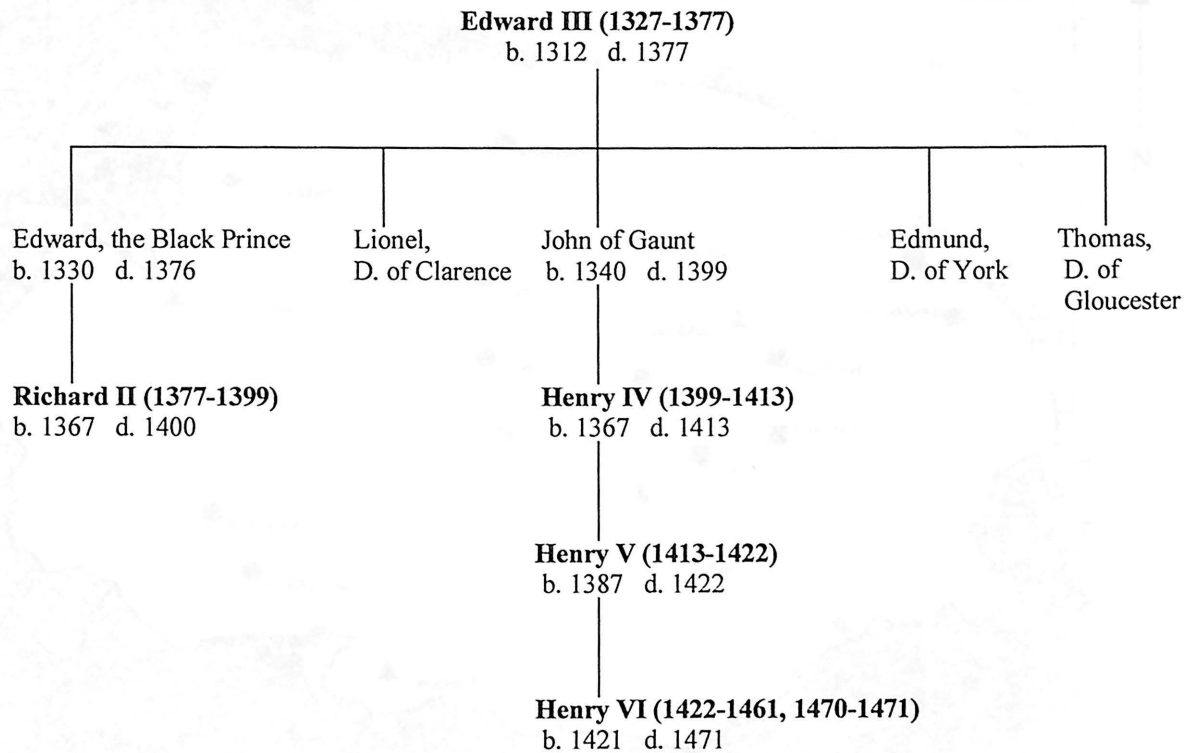
reference was made to his career to date a matter in dispute in 1443 [15 years after his death].”<sup>253</sup>

During his thirty-seven year service to the House of Lancaster, Sir Thomas Erpingham had served as a warrior, administrator, commissioner, ambassador, court justice, warden, constable, military commander, and confidante to three generations of great men. Luck, no doubt, was his ally during these years as he was fortunate enough to be in the service of the illustrious John of Gaunt; then was attached to a man who would seize the throne, Henry Bolingbroke; and, finally, be at the side of the greatest English king of the fifteenth century as he participated in the spectacular battlefield triumph over the French at Agincourt.

Luck, however, was not *why* these great men insisted that Erpingham be at their side. For that, one must look at the sacrifices (done ultimately in the search for greater glory) Sir Thomas made to be part of the Lancastrian inner-circle. The best example of this is the voluntary sharing of Bolingbroke’s exile in 1398. At the time there was no guarantee that Erpingham would ever see again his wife or lands in England, but it was the ultimate demonstration, next to death in battle, of his fidelity and devotion to the Lancastrian cause.

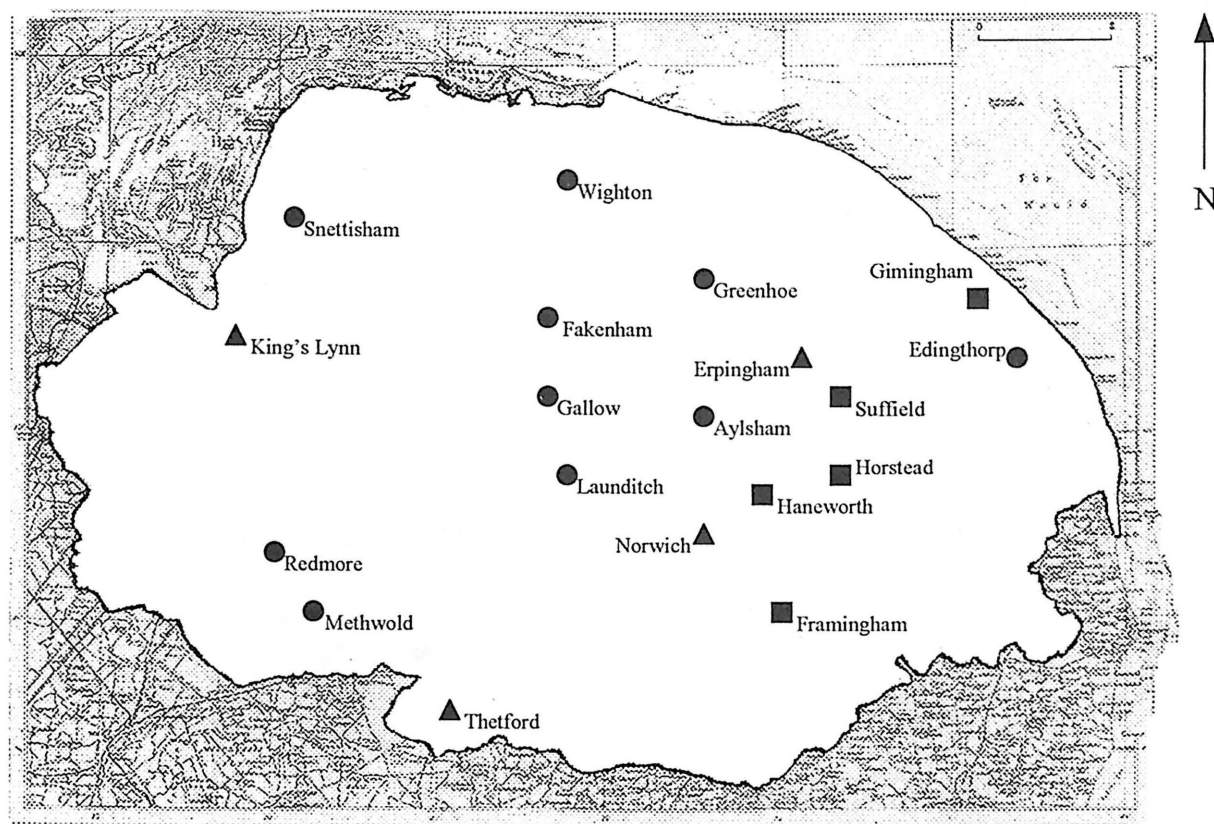
Sir Thomas Erpingham, in the words of William Shakespeare, “a good old commander and a most kind gentleman”, is the personification of the chivalric, skilled, and devout Christian knight of which Medieval legends have been made for over six hundred years. The House of Lancaster’s faithful servant should be remembered by history as an example of what faith, loyalty, and dedication can achieve for a man and his lord.

## The Kings of England during Sir Thomas Erpingham's Lifetime





## The Norfolk Lands of John of Gaunt and Sir Thomas Erpingham

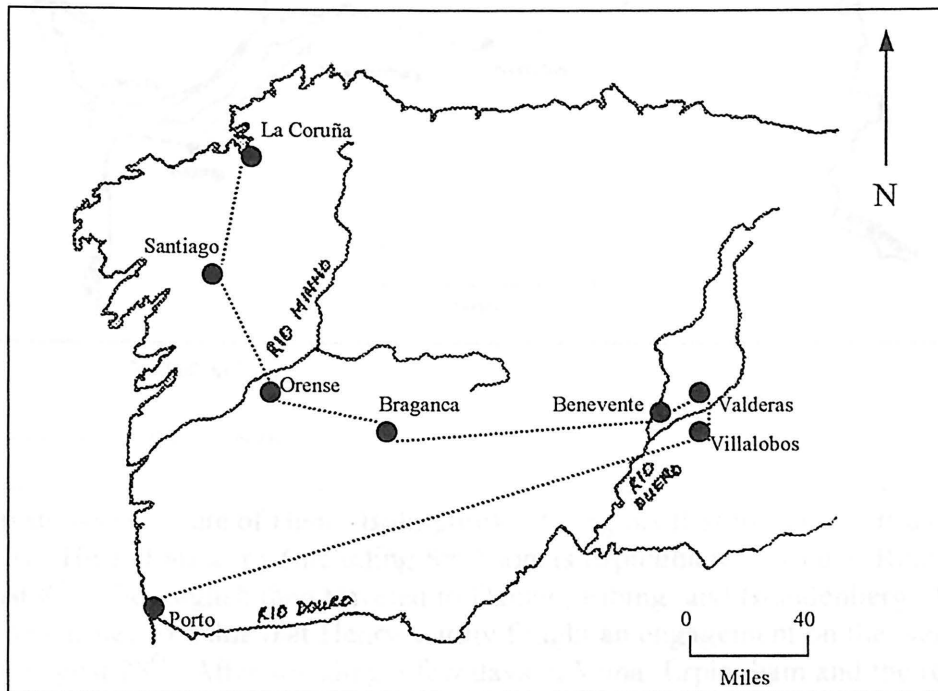


- Lands or Manors held by John of Gaunt
- Lands or Manors held by Sir Thomas Erpingham
- ▲ Lands or Manors in which Gaunt and Erpingham both had an interest

The concentration of lands held by the Lancastrian duchy in Norfolk was the main reason how John of Gaunt came to know the Erpingham family. Because of his long and faithful service in the Lancastrian retinue, Sir Thomas was able to add substantial holdings to his family's original collection of property in the county.

Map is based on one found in University of London, Institute of Historical Research. The Victoria History of the County of Norfolk. Volume One. London: Archibald Constable and Co., 1901.

## Sir Thomas Erpingham's Campaign with Lancaster in Spain in 1386-87

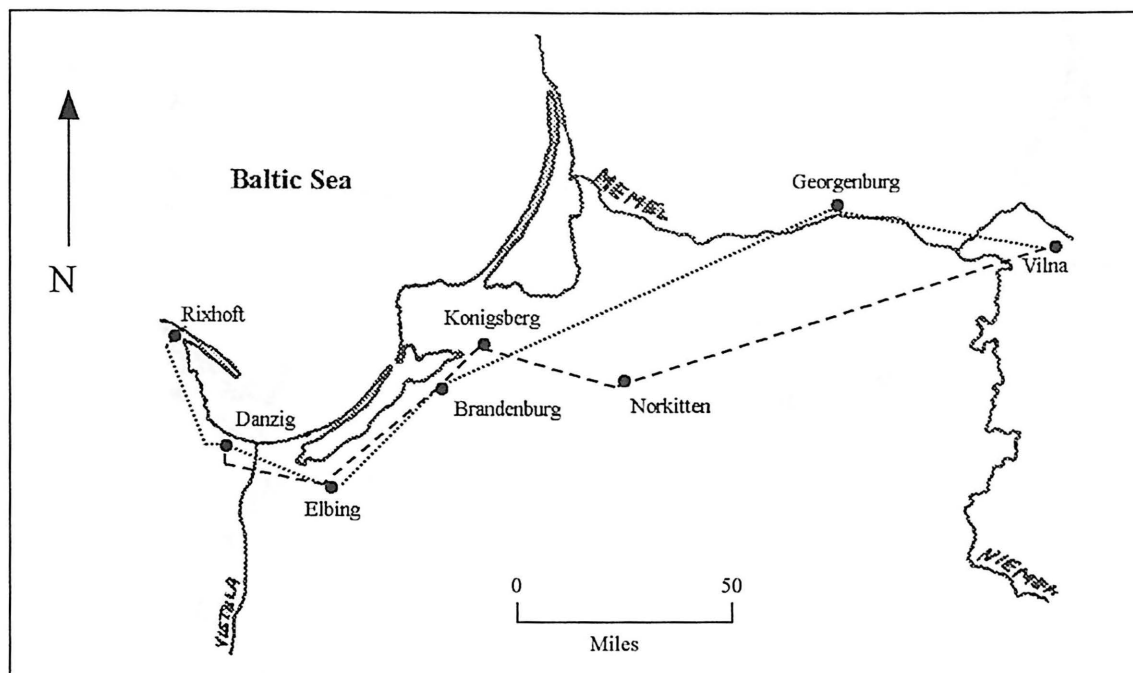


..... Route taken by the Lancastrian army

Sir Thomas Erpingham and the rest of the Duke of Lancaster's army landed in La Coruña in July 1386. They marched immediately to Santiago, and then besieged Orense (where the army went into winter quarters). After Lancaster concluded the Treaty of Ponte do Mouro with King João of Portugal, the English marched to, and captured, Benevente. The campaign ended after the sieges of Valderas and Villalobos. Erpingham and the remnants of the army marched to Porto where they boarded ships for the return voyage to England.

Map is based on one found in P.E. Russell, The English Intervention in Spain and Portugal in the time of Edward III and Richard II (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1955).

## The First Journey of Sir Thomas Erpingham to Prussia, 1390-91



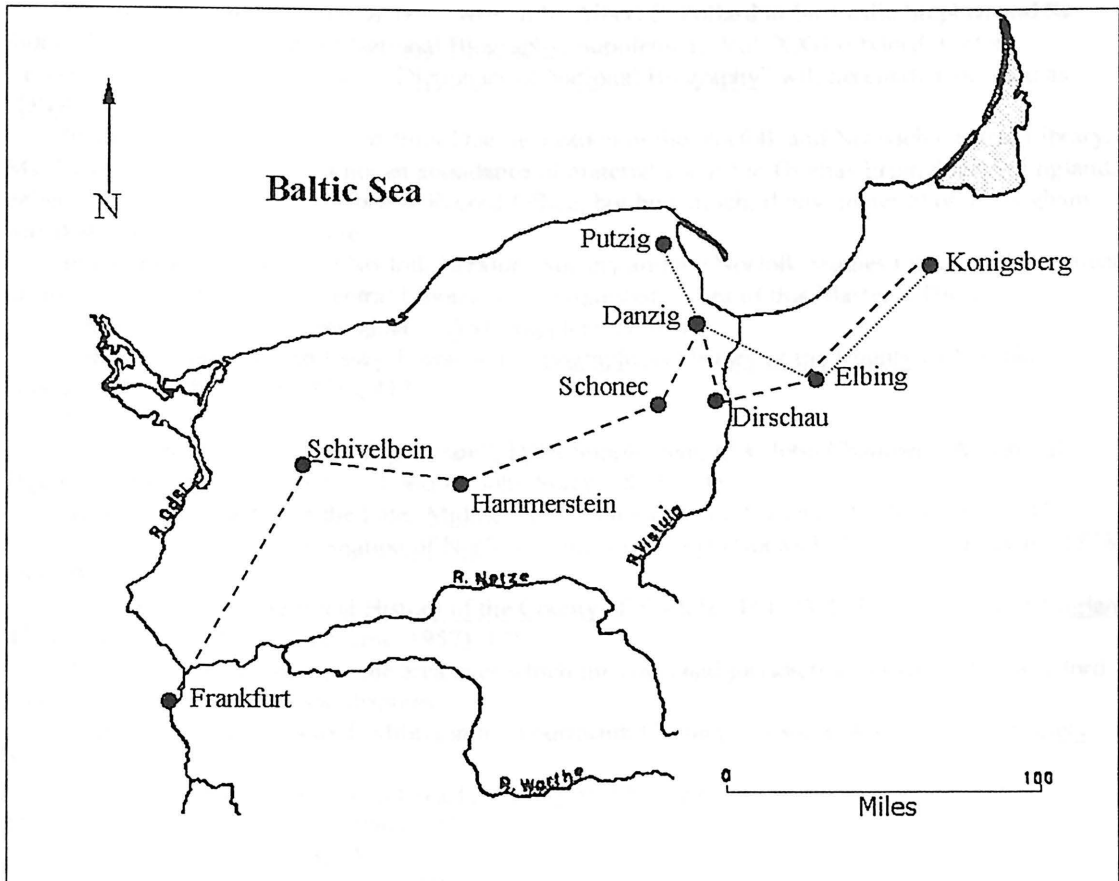
..... Rixhoft to Vilna

----- Vilna to Danzig

This map shows the route of Henry Bolingbroke during his first mission to Prussia in 1390-91. He and his army (including Sir Thomas Erpingham) landed at Rixhöft on August 8<sup>th</sup>. The English then traveled to Danzig, Elbing, and Brandenburg. It was on the journey to Vilna that Henry's army fought an engagement on the Nerva River on August 28<sup>th</sup>. After spending a few days in Vilna, Erpingham and the rest of Bolingbroke's forces traveled to Norkitten. The rest of their return trip included stops in Königsberg (where they spent the winter), Brandenburg, and Elbing. The army departed for England from Danzig on February 15, 1391.

Map is based on one found in F.R.H. DuBoulay and Caroline Barron, The Reign of Richard II: Essays in Honour of May McKisack (London: Athlone Press, 1971).

## The Second Journey of Sir Thomas Erpingham to Prussia, 1392



- ..... Putzig to Königsberg
- Königsberg to Frankfurt to Holy Land

This map shows the route of Henry Bolingbroke during his second mission to Prussia in 1392. He and his army marched from Putzig (where they arrived on August 10<sup>th</sup>) to Königsberg (arriving September 2<sup>nd</sup>). They stayed in Königsberg for only a short time and had marched back to Schöneec by the last week of September. It was at Schöneec that Sir Thomas Erpingham met Derby's army. From Schöneec, Erpingham traveled through Hammerstein, Schivelbein, and Frankfurt. It was from this last city that Bolingbroke's contingent began their journey to the Holy Land.

Map is based on one found in F.R.H. DuBoulay and Caroline Barron, The Reign of Richard II: Essays in Honour of May McKisack (London: Athlone Press, 1971).

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Sir Thomas Erpingham has an entry written by Albert F. Pollard in Sir Leslie Stephen and Sir Sidney Lee, eds., Dictionary of National Biography, Supplement, Vol. XXII (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1921), 614-615. "Dictionary of National Biography" will hereinafter be cited as "DNB".
- <sup>2</sup> In a letter this author received from Dianne Yeadon of the Norfolk and Norwich Central Library, Ms. Yeadon states that there is not an abundance of material about Sir Thomas Erpingham in England, either. There was a fire at the Norfolk Record Office, but how much, if any, material on Erpingham was destroyed is unknown to me.
- <sup>3</sup> In the meantime, both the Norfolk Heraldry Society and the Norfolk Studies Office (a department of the Norfolk and Norwich Central Library) have requested copies of this Master's Thesis.
- <sup>4</sup> Pollard, "Sir Thomas Erpingham", DNB Supplement, 614.
- <sup>5</sup> Francis Blomefield, An Essay Towards a Topographical History of the County of Norfolk (London: W. Miller, 1805-1810), 412.
- <sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 413.
- <sup>7</sup> *Ibid.* Pollard, "Sir Thomas Erpingham", DNB Supplement, 614. John Chambers, A General History of the County of Norfolk (London: John Stacy, 1829), 203.
- <sup>8</sup> M.H. Keen, England in the Later Middle Ages (London: Folio Society, 1997), 97, 142, 147.
- <sup>9</sup> William Harvey, The Visitation of Norfolk in the Year 1563 (Norwich: Miller and Leavins, 1878), 193-194.
- <sup>10</sup> Blomefield, Topographical History of the County of Norfolk, 414. W.E. Lunt, History of England 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (New York: Harper and Row, 1957), 175.
- <sup>11</sup> A leet is a special court (or the area over which the court had jurisdiction) in which the area lord had jurisdiction to decide local disputes.
- <sup>12</sup> William Hudson, "Norwich Militia in the Fourteenth Century," Norfolk Archeological Society XIV (1901), 302, 316.
- <sup>13</sup> Michael Prestwich, Armies and Warfare in the Middle Ages: the English Experience (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 123.
- <sup>14</sup> Lunt, History of England, 213.
- <sup>15</sup> Sydney Armitage-Smith, John of Gaunt (London: Constable, 1964), 8-9.
- <sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 10. The reference is to Gaunt's 1384 punitive expedition to Scotland.
- <sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.
- <sup>18</sup> Michael Hicks, Who's Who in Late-Medieval England (London: Shephard-Walwyn, 1991), 108-109.
- <sup>19</sup> Armitage-Smith, John of Gaunt, 15-20.
- <sup>20</sup> Anthony Goodman, John of Gaunt: the Exercise of Princely Power in Fourteenth-Century Europe (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992), 228.
- <sup>21</sup> G.H. Martin, ed., Knighton's Chronicle, 1337-1396 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 195. Knighton was very kind in his remarks about John of Gaunt. He usually referred to him as "the good duke".
- <sup>22</sup> Goodman, John of Gaunt, 73, 228.
- <sup>23</sup> Nigel Saul, Richard II (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 28-29. Armitage-Smith, John of Gaunt, 143-144. Edward M. Thompson, "John of Gaunt", DNB, Volume X, Howard-Kenneth, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1917), 859-860.
- <sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 860. Richard was crowned on July 16, 1399 and Lancaster made his speech before Parliament on October 13<sup>th</sup>.
- <sup>25</sup> Armitage-Smith, John of Gaunt, 63-64, 92. Don Pedro was murdered by his French and Portuguese enemies after defeat at the battle of Toledo. The author maintains there was "no pretence on either side of any motive but convenience" with regard to the marriage of Lancaster and Constance.
- <sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 92-93.
- <sup>27</sup> Keen, England in the Later Middle Ages, 15-16.
- <sup>28</sup> Prestwich, Armies and Warfare, 95.
- <sup>29</sup> Charles Jewson, People of Medieval Norwich (Norwich: Jerrold and Sons, 1955), 82. This view

is also supported by Elizabeth Armstrong of the Norfolk Heraldry Society.

Simon Walker, Lancastrian Affinity (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 183. The next highest figure is £500 p.a. due to Michael de la Pole, Earl of Suffolk. The Mowbray family possessed lands of higher total value (£1,400), but they were in the hands of Margaret, the dowager countess thus severely reducing the political influence of their holdings.

A hundred is a division of a county which was used to help establish the latter's quota for taxation and military recruitment, *etc.* In 1396, Sir Thomas would hold these same hundreds of Erpingham for life by grant of the Duke of Lancaster. Trevor John, "Sir Thomas Erpingham, East Anglian Society and the Dynastic Revolution of 1399," Norfolk Archaeology, XXXV (1970), 98.

"Also recorded...Our Lady of Walsingham", Walker, Lancastrian Affinity, 184.

*Ibid.*, 185-186.

J.P. Kenyon, A Dictionary of British History (Hertfordshire: Wordsworth, 1992), 370.

Martin, Knighton's Chronicle, 251.

Goodman, John of Gaunt, 241. Thompson, "John of Gaunt", DNB Volume X, 859.

Pollard, "Sir Thomas Erpingham", DNB Supplement, 614. Jewson, People of Medieval Norwich, 81. The DNB Supplement also states that the gate Erpingham built at the Norwich Cathedral was in done in penance for his support of the Lollards.

H.R. Loyn, ed., The Middle Ages: A Concise Encyclopedia (London: Thames and Hudson, 1989) 336; Kenyon, Dictionary of British History, 354.

Walker, Lancastrian Affinity, 153-154.

Thompson, "John of Gaunt", DNB Volume X, 860.

John, "Sir Thomas Erpingham", 96. Eleanor C. Lodge and Robert Somerville, John of Gaunt's Register, 1379-1383 (London: Royal Historical Society, 1937), 17-18. An esquire was a young man of "good birth" was attendant upon a knight.

*Ibid.* Sir Thomas' payment is confirmed by Lancaster's order to Adam Pope, receiver in the county of Norfolk, to begin payments of £20 annually to the knight upon receipt of "letters of acquittance." *Ibid.*, 116.

Prestwich, Armies and Warfare, 96-97. The author states "restoration of horses, or *restor*, was an important element in the contracts for military service."

Armitage-Smith, John of Gaunt, 242-243. The author mentions the town of Berwick as one that exchanged hands on more than one occasion.

Goodman, John of Gaunt, 76.

Armitage-Smith, John of Gaunt, 243.

*Ibid.*

May McKisack, The Fourteenth Century (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959), 438. Armitage-Smith, John of Gaunt, 246-247. The latter contains the quote. Both books make the point about Gaunt's interest in achieving peace with Scotland, so that he would be able to pursue the crown of Castile.

Thompson, "John of Gaunt", DNB, Volume X, 860.

*Ibid.*

Goodman, John of Gaunt, 82.

Armitage-Smith, John of Gaunt, 246-247.

C. Warren Hollister, The Making of England: 55 B.C. to 1399 (Lexington: D.C. Heath, 1996), 309.

Armitage-Smith, John of Gaunt, 248.

R.B. Dobson, The Peasants' Revolt of 1381 (London: MacMillan, 1970), 43. Martin, Knighton's Chronicle, 231.

Edgar Powell, The Rising in East Anglia in 1381 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1896), 27-28, 35.

Pollard, "Sir Thomas Erpingham", DNB Supplement, 614.

Prestwich, Armies and Warfare, 123-124.

Pollard, "Sir Thomas Erpingham", DNB Supplement, 614. Powell, Rising in East Anglia, 59.

There were suspicions that King Richard was in contact with the rebels during the 1381 Peasants' Revolt and encouraged them to attack Gaunt's possessions. See Powell, Rising in East Anglia, 59.

- 61 Armitage-Smith, John of Gaunt, 276.  
 62 *Ibid.*, 277.  
 63 Walker, The Lancastrian Affinity, 41  
 64 Armitage-Smith, John of Gaunt, 278.  
 65 *Ibid.*  
 66 Martin, Knighton's Chronicle, 335.  
 67 Armitage-Smith, John of Gaunt, 279.  
 68 *Ibid.*  
 69 Kenyon, Dictionary of British History, 270.  
 70 Goodman, John of Gaunt, 102. Armitage-Smith, John of Gaunt, 283.  
 71 *Ibid.*, 290.  
 72 *Ibid.*, 292.  
 73 *Ibid.*, 291.  
 74 Goodman, John of Gaunt, 102-103.  
 75 Pollard, "Sir Thomas Erpingham", DNB Supplement, 614. Erpingham was appointed to similar  
 commissions in other counties as well. Armitage-Smith, John of Gaunt, 288, 293.  
 76 Armitage-Smith, John of Gaunt, 293. Saul, Richard II, 146. It seems that French policy was  
 hijacked by Philip the Bold, Duke of Burgundy. He was exercising great influence in France due to  
 the fact that the French king, Charles VI, was 12 years old when he came to the throne. The exact  
 reason why the force was sent to the Low Countries is not known, but it may have something to do  
 with the wool trade between England and Flanders. Edouard Perroy, The Hundred Years War  
 (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1959), 191.  
 77 *Ibid.*, 295. King Richard could only contribute half as many.  
 78 Walker, The Lancastrian Affinity, 41.  
 79 Norman Lewis, "The Last Medieval Summons of the English Feudal Levy, 13 June 1385", The  
English Historical Review 73 (January 1958), 1-26. The author contends that "the military  
 obligation inherent in land tenure had still sufficient practical vitality as well as legal validity to make  
 an effective contribution to the successful and economical working of the system by which it had  
 been superseded." *Ibid.*, 15.  
 80 The Great Schism was the name given to the dispute as to which pope, and which town, was the  
 rightful head and seat of the Church. During this time (1378-1417), different popes were in  
 residence at Avignon and Rome. An attempt to depose both popes resulted in the election of a third  
 pope, but only added to the confusion. During the Schism, Scotland and France supported the pope  
 at Avignon, while England (and various other countries) supported the pope at Rome., Loyn, The  
Middle Ages, 153.  
 81 Armitage-Smith, John of Gaunt, 296.  
 82 Goodman, John of Gaunt, 104.  
 83 Armitage-Smith, John of Gaunt, 296-297. Saul, Richard II, 145.  
 84 Armitage-Smith, John of Gaunt, 296-298.  
 85 *Ibid.*, 261-262. In 1380, a treaty was signed between England and Portugal in which the latter  
 agreed to support Lancaster's claim to the Castilian throne in exchange for English military aid  
 against Castile. Lancaster being detained by internal English politics, his brother, the Earl of  
 Cambridge, went to Portugal and fought against Castile. This English expedition was to prove a  
 monumental failure; the army mutinied and Lancaster never arrived with additional men. Lancaster  
 summoned his retinue on November 20, 1382. *Ibid.*, 268.  
 86 P.E. Russell, The English Intervention in Spain and Portugal in the time of Edward III and  
Richard II (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1955), 401, 403, 414-416. Armitage-Smith, John of Gaunt,  
 298-299. The English and the Portuguese concluded the Treaty of Windsor on May 9, 1386. This  
 alliance was secured partly to counter the Franco-Castilian naval alliance. The king of Portugal  
 promised to send 10 warships to England to help secure that country against a French invasion. This  
 threat also compelled the government to order Lancaster to send the fleet home immediately after  
 landing on the peninsula.  
 87 *Ibid.*, 260.  
 88 Calendar of the Close Rolls, Richard II, Volume II, 557.  
 89 Armitage-Smith, John of Gaunt, 304. These papal dispensations were granted before the first



- expedition and were extended for this one. Russell, English Intervention, 409.
- 90 This figure is taken from Armitage-Smith, John of Gaunt, 309, but Russell is not certain about the size of the duke's army. His reason being that "since responsibility for raising and paying the Lancastrian troops rested with the duchy officials, and not with the king's officers, no accounts for their payment survive and we have no documentary record of the exact size of the force now raised." A few pages later, the author lends support a Portuguese chronicler's claim that the *army* numbered 3,000 men-at-arms and the total force was not more than 7,000. Russell, English Intervention, 406, 418.
- 91 *Ibid.*, 407. Armitage-Smith, John of Gaunt, 309. Ships were also sent from Portugal and Holland to assist in the transportation of Gaunt's army.
- 92 *Ibid.*, 310; Pollard, "Sir Thomas Erpingham", DNB Supplement, 614. Armitage-Smith reports that most of Gaunt's retinue was included, but his son, Henry, was left behind to tend to the Lancastrian estates. The date of departure has also been reported as July 9, 1385; Russell, English Intervention, 417.
- 93 Martin, Knighton's Chronicle, 345.
- 94 Armitage-Smith, John of Gaunt, 311. A chronology prepared for the "Erpingham Symposium" held in Norwich states that he was at the relief of Brest. No specific information is given as to his role in the relief operations. The "rehearsal" theory is from Russell, English Intervention, 419.
- 95 Armitage-Smith, John of Gaunt, 322. Armitage-Smith refers specifically to Froissart's account of the campaign. *Ibid.*, 321.
- 96 P.E. Russell, "The War in Spain and Portugal" in J.J.N. Palmer, ed. Froissart: Historian (Suffolk: Bowdell Press, 1981), 97.
- 97 Russell, English Intervention, 420.
- 98 Armitage-Smith, John of Gaunt, 312-313. Russell, English Intervention, 432. Goodman, John of Gaunt, 120.
- 99 Jean Froissart, Chronicles ed. by Geoffrey Brereton (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1968), 329.
- 100 Goodman, John of Gaunt, 121.
- 101 *Ibid.*, 122.
- 102 *Ibid.*, 123. Armitage-Smith, John of Gaunt, 316-319. Other provisions of the treaty include the marriage of Lancaster's daughter, Philippa, to João; the cession, by Lancaster, of a line of towns on the Portuguese border; and the termination of Sir Thomas Percy's mission to the peninsula. One author calls the cession of the towns a "first-class political blunder." Russell, English Intervention, 441.
- 103 Goodman, John of Gaunt, 123.
- 104 Armitage-Smith, John of Gaunt, 324.
- 105 *Ibid.*, 321.
- 106 *Ibid.*
- 107 Goodman, John of Gaunt, 124.
- 108 *Ibid.*
- 109 *Ibid.*
- 110 Armitage-Smith, John of Gaunt, 325. The king was advised to adopt this evasive strategy by his French allies who, after the crushing defeats at Crécy and Poitiers, did all they could to avoid open-field, set-piece battles. Lancaster had experienced this strategy at the hands of Charles V during his invasion of France in 1373. Russell, English Intervention, 431-432.
- 111 *Ibid.*, 448
- 112 Froissart, Chronicles, 331.
- 113 Russell, English Intervention, 445.
- 114 Goodman, John of Gaunt, 127-128.
- 115 Russell, English Intervention, 462.
- 116 Thompson, "John of Gaunt", DNB, Volume X, 862.
- 117 Thomas F. Tout, "Henry IV" DNB, Volume IX, Harris to Hovenden, 482. Kenyon, Dictionary of British History, 270. Duke Robert was exiled to the Continent where he died in 1392 at the age of thirty.
- 118 Walker, Lancastrian Affinity, 37.
- 119 John, "Sir Thomas Erpingham", 96. Eric Christiansen, The Northern Crusades: The Baltic and and Catholic Frontier, 1100-1525 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1980), 150.
- 120 F.R.H. DuBoulay, "Henry of Derby's Expeditions to Prussia 1390-1 and 1392" in The Reign of



- Richard II: Essays in Honour of May McKisack eds. F.R.H. DuBoulay and Caroline Barron (London: Athlone Press, 1971), 154. The author speculates that Henry received King Richard's blessing so that the latter could be rid of Henry's presence as a rival symbol of authority.
- 121 Christopher Tyerman, England and the Crusades: 1095-1588 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 266. Crusading in the Baltic region was first preached by Bernard of Clairvaux in 1147 during the preparation for the Second Crusade.
- 122 *Ibid.*, 267, 270.
- 123 Jewson, People of Medieval Norwich, 83. Tout, "Henry IV", DNB, Vol. IX, 483.
- 124 *Reyse* was the name used to describe campaigning in this part of Europe.
- 125 Christiansen, Northern Crusades, 160-161. Bolingbroke was originally scheduled to go crusading in North Africa. Why he changed his mind is not known. It has been speculated that the king of France refused to allow safe passage. DuBoulay, "Henry of Derby", 162. Tyerman, England and the Crusades, 271.
- 126 Christiansen, Northern Crusades, 164.
- 127 Johann von Posilge, *Script. Rer. Pruss.* iii, 164-165 as quoted in Tout, "Henry IV", DNB, Volume IX, 483.
- 128 DuBoulay, "Henry of Derby", 164.
- 129 *Ibid.*
- 130 *Ibid.*, 165. DuBoulay writes that a "gunner archer" was present. Cannon were becoming more prevalent during the late fourteenth century. They were quite unpredictable, however, and were considered "almost as dangerous to those firing them as to those at whom they were fired." Prestwich, Armies and Warfare, 293.
- 131 DuBoulay, "Henry of Derby", 165. Jewson, People of Medieval Norwich, 83-84. Bryan Bevan, Henry IV (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994), 30.
- 132 Calendar of the Patent Rolls, Richard II, Vol. V, 88.
- 133 Both of Derby's expeditions to Prussia were, in large part, paid for by his father. Gaunt gave his son funds out of the money he received as part of the Castilian settlement. DuBoulay, "Expedition to Prussia", 164-165, 168-169.
- 134 Tout, "Henry IV", DNB, Volume IX, 485. There was also the legend that the Knights and Henry fought over the right to carry the banner of St. George—patron saint of the English and the Teutons. Jewson, People of Medieval Norwich, 84.
- 135 DuBoulay, "Expedition to Prussia", 167. The personal relationship between Rabe, the marshal of Prussia and Henry's sponsor during the latter's first visit to Prussia, continued to be excellent. In fact, the marshal loaned Henry £400.
- 136 Jewson, People of Medieval Norwich, 85. Bevan, Henry IV, 140.
- 137 Lucy Toulmin Smith, Expeditions to Prussia and the Holy Land made by Henry, earl of Derby (London: Camden Society, 1894), 189, 278.
- 138 DuBoulay, "Expedition to Prussia", 167.
- 139 Jewson, People of Medieval Norwich, 86.
- 140 Bevan, Henry IV, 34. Tout, "Henry IV", DNB, Volume IX, 484.
- 141 DuBoulay, "Expedition to Prussia", 172.
- 142 *Ibid.*
- 143 Froissart, Chronicles, 437.
- 144 Hicks, Who's Who in Late Medieval England, 149-151.
- 145 Bevan, Henry IV, 36-38, 50.
- 146 Sir James Ramsay, Genesis of Lancaster Vol. II (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1913), 337.
- 147 *Ibid.*
- 148 *Ibid.*, 339-341. These pages include the quote.
- 149 Bevan, Henry IV, 50.
- 150 Froissart, Chronicles, 439.
- 151 Keen, England in the Later Middle Ages, 268.
- 152 Froissart, Chronicles, 439.
- 153 Walker, Lancastrian Affinity, 193. Jewson, People of Medieval Norwich, 87. Sir Thomas had become a relatively wealthy man in the service of the House of Lancaster. Perhaps the most lucrative grant Erpingham received (from John of Gaunt) was the hundreds of South Erpingham for life.

- Confirmed in *Calendar of the Patent Rolls*, Richard II, Volume VI, 76.
- 154 John, "Sir Thomas Erpingham", 96.
- 155 Ramsay, *Genesis of Lancaster*, 342.
- 156 *Ibid.*, 345. Another barrier to the usurpation of the throne was eliminated on July 20, 1398 when Roger Mortimer, the Earl of March and heir presumptive died while campaigning in Ireland. He had a son, Edmund Mortimer, but he was only a boy of six years.
- 157 McKisack, *The Fourteenth Century*, 488.
- 158 Bevan, *Henry IV*, 54. The Committee canceled the letters patent by which Henry had the power to appoint attorneys. Ramsay, *Genesis of Lancaster*, 346. McKisack, *The Fourteenth Century*, 490.
- 159 Chris Given-Wilson, "The Betrayal and Capture of the King according to Jean Creton" in *Chronicles of the Revolution, 1397-1400: The Reign of Richard II* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993), 105-106. This book contains excerpts from the contemporaneous chronicles of Richard's deposition.
- 160 Apparently, Archbishop Arundel had been exiled for treason in connection with the Lords Appellant crisis in 1388.
- 161 Bevan, *Henry IV*, 56. Given-Wilson, "Introduction" in *Chronicles of the Revolution*, 28-30 and "The Alliance between Bolingbroke and Orléans", 113-114. These latter pages contain the actual text of the agreement quoted in the body of this paper.
- 162 "Bolingbroke's Departure from France" in *Chronicles of the Revolution*, 109. Given-Wilson quotes the *Chronique de Saint-Denys*, vol. 2, 697-708 for this information.
- 163 "Introduction" in *Ibid.*, 32. Keen, *England in the Later Middle Ages*, 269.
- 164 *Ibid.*
- 165 Ramsay, *Genesis of Lancaster*, 351. Ramsay notes that the estimates of the army are quite inconsistent. Bevan uses the figure of 300, Bevan, *Henry IV*, 56.
- 166 Given-Wilson, "Introduction" *Chronicles of the Revolution*, 32-33. Keen, *England in the Later Middle Ages*, 271.
- 167 Ramsay, *Genesis of Lancaster*, 354. Henry had also made a convert out of John Beaufort, marquis of Dorset, Admiral of All the Fleets, and his half-brother.
- 168 Given-Wilson, "Bolingbroke's campaign and his meeting with Richard according to the monk of Evesham", in *Chronicles of the Revolution*, 127.
- 169 Ramsay, *Genesis of Lancaster*, 358.
- 170 Given-Wilson, "Introduction" in *Chronicles of the Revolution*, 38-39. Keen, *England in the Later Middle Ages*, 272-273. McKisack, *The Fourteenth Century*, 492-493. There is some conjecture as to the fidelity of Northumberland's negotiations with King Richard. Some historians have argued that the meeting at Conway was solely an attempt to get the king out of the castle so he could be taken prisoner. Given-Wilson, "Introduction" in *Chronicles of the Revolution*, 39.
- 171 Benjamin Williams, ed., *Chronique de la Traïson et Mort de Richart Deux Roy D'Engleterre* (London: Dépens de la Société, 1846), 200-201.
- 172 Given-Wilson, "Thomas Walsingham's account of the Revolution" in *Chronicles of the Revolution*, 116.
- 173 George B. Stow, ed. *Historia Vitae et Regni Ricardi Secundi* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1977), 153.
- 174 Given-Wilson, "Introduction", 3, 7.
- 175 Charles Kingsford, *English Historical Literature in the Fifteenth Century* (New York: Burt Franklin, 1913), 15-16.
- 176 *Ibid.*, "The Manner of King Richard's Renunciation" in *Chronicles of the Revolution*, 130.
- 177 *Ibid.*, "Introduction", 40.
- 178 Bevan, *Henry IV*, 59.
- 179 Marie Louise Bruce, *The Usurper King: Henry of Bolingbroke, 1366-99* (London: Rubicon Press, 1987), 216.
- 180 Rev. Francis Charles Hingeston, *The Chronicle of England by John Capgrave* (London: Longman, 1858), 272. John, "Sir Thomas Erpingham", 96-97. Given-Wilson, "The Manner of King Richard's Renunciation", in *Chronicles of the Revolution*, 163-164.
- 181 *Ibid.*, 164.
- 182 *Ibid.*, 166.

- 183 *Ibid.*, "Introduction", 50-51.
- 184 Williams, *Chronique de la Traïson*, 237. J.H. Wylie, *History of England under Henry IV, Volume*
- 185 *I: 1399-1404* (London: Longmans, 1884), 97.
- 186 *Calendar of the Patent Rolls*, Henry IV, Volume I, 211, 267-268.
- 187 Given-Wilson, "The Record and Process" in *Chronicles of the Revolution*, 51-52; Wylie, *Henry*
- 188 *IV, Vol. I*, 108.
- 189 John, "Sir Thomas Erpingham", 97. Williams, *Chronique de la Traïson*, 251.
- 190 John, "Sir Thomas Erpingham", 97.
- 191 Allmand, *Henry V*, 78.
- 192 *Calendar of the Close Rolls*, Henry IV, Volume I, 335.
- 193 *Calendar of the Close Rolls*, Richard II, Volume VI, 521.
- 194 John, "Sir Thomas Erpingham", 99, 102-103.
- 195 *Calendar of the Patent Rolls*, Henry IV, Volume I, 93, 561.
- 196 John, "Sir Thomas Erpingham", 101, 105. The author states that many of the members of
- 197 Parliament during the years 1399-1410 were members of Erpingham's inner-circle and had been
- 198 members of John of Gaunt's retinue. There is no evidence that Sir Thomas was ever a member of
- 199 Parliament.
- 200 *Calendar of the Patent Rolls*, Henry IV, Volume I, 78, 178, 185, 274.
- 201 *Calendar of the Fine Rolls*, Henry IV, Volume XII, 22,
- 202 *Calendar of the Patent Rolls*, Henry IV, Volume IV, 169.
- 203 Wylie, *Henry IV, Vol. II*, 34. The footnotes mention that Sir Thomas loaned the king 1,000 marks
- 204 in 1404 for "expenses by sea."
- 205 John, "Sir Thomas Erpingham", 99.
- 206 Keen, *England in the Later Middle Ages*, 306. The author specifically mentions Sir Thomas
- 207 Erpingham as an example of this change.
- 208 *Calendar of the Patent Rolls*, Richard II, Volume VI, 592; confirmed in *Calendar of the Patent*
- 209 *Rolls*, Henry IV, Vol. I, 78; S.B. Chrimes, R.A. Griffiths, and C.D. Ross, *Fifteenth Century England,*
- 210 *1399-1509: Studies in Politics and Society* (London: Alan Sutton, 1972), 16
- 211 M.R. Powicke and T.A. Sandquist, eds., "Lancastrian Captains" in *Essays in Medieval History*
- 212 *presented to Bernie Wilkinson* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1969), 374.
- 213 The Order of the Garter is the most ancient and distinguished order of knighthood in England.
- 214 Founded by King Edward III in 1348, who modeled it on the myth of King Arthur and the Knights of
- 215 the Round Table, membership in the Order was at the discretion of the monarch. Knights had a stall in
- 216 St. George's Chapel in Windsor. Sir Thomas was nominated to take the place of Thomas Beauchamp,
- 12<sup>th</sup> Earl of Warwick. William A. Shaw, *The Knights of England* (London: Sheratt and Hughes, 1906),
- 4, 8. John, "Sir Thomas Erpingham", 97-98.
- 204 *Ibid.*, 101. Jewson, *People of Medieval Norwich*, 74.
- 205 John, "Sir Thomas Erpingham", 101.
- 206 Information for this paragraph (including the quotation) comes from *Ibid.* and Ian Atherton, *et al.*,
- 207 eds. *Norwich Cathedral: Church, City and Diocese, 1096-1996* (London: Hambledon Press, 1996), 205.
- 208 Tout, "Henry IV", *DNB*, Volume IX, 487. Bevan, *Henry IV*, 78.
- 209 Charles Kingsford, "Thomas, Duke of Clarence", *DNB*, Volume XIX, Stow-Tytler, 638. The
- 210 most comprehensive survey of his life is in the *DNB* and there is scant mention of Erpingham's
- 211 involvement in these crises.
- 212 Wylie, *Henry IV, Vol. II*, 231. Pollard, "Sir Thomas Erpingham", *DNB* Supplement, 615.
- 213 Prestwich, *Armies and Warfare*, 171-172.
- 214 Chrimes, Griffiths, and Ross, *Fifteenth-Century England*, 17.
- 215 Keen, *England in the Later Middle Ages*, 411.
- 216 Kingsford, "Thomas, Duke of Clarence", *DNB*, Volume XIX, 638. Wylie, *Henry IV, Vol. I*, 231.
- 217 Kingsford, "Thomas, Duke of Clarence", *DNB*, Volume XIX, 638.
- 218 John, "Sir Thomas Erpingham", 106.
- 219 Pollard, "Sir Thomas Erpingham", *DNB* Supplement, 615. Wylie, *Henry IV, Vol. III*, 49-51;
- 220 95-96. The marriage negotiations crumbled and Marie "took the vow of perpetual maidenhood." The
- 221 peace negotiations yielded a two-month armistice. Erpingham also participated in peace discussions in
- 222 Gloucester in December 1407. These talks led to a three-month truce.

- 217 *Calendar of the Patent Rolls*, Henry IV, Vol. IV, 57. Pollard, "Sir Thomas Erpingham", *DNB*  
Supplement, 615.
- 218 John claims that Erpingham was aligned with Monmouth and that this fact was one of the  
reasons the former surrendered his posts as Lord Warden and Constable. At the time of the disputes  
between Henry IV and Prince Henry, the king was very ill and perhaps Erpingham wanted to stand in  
good favor with the heir apparent. For a more comprehensive treatment of this crisis, see Peter  
McNiven, "Prince Henry and the English Political Crisis of 1412", *History* 65 (1980), 1-16.
- 219 J. Horace Round, *Kings, Serjeants, & Officers of State* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1970), 68.
- 220 Alan Rogers, "The Royal Household of Henry IV" (Ph.D. diss., University of Nottingham, 1966),  
721. Sir Thomas was appointed in March of that year, while Henry of Monmouth was not coronated  
until April 9<sup>th</sup>. It appears the new king desired some continuity in royal affairs. There is also  
evidence that supports the idea that Erpingham was Henry's steward while the latter was still Prince  
of Wales. *Ibid.*, 720. Allmand, *Henry V*, 21.
- 221 Keen, *England in the Later Middle Ages*, 299.
- 222 Lunt, *History of England*, 219-220.
- 223 Robin Neillands, *The Hundred Years War* (London: Routledge, 1990), 200.
- 224 Allmand, *Henry V*, 17
- 225 *Ibid.*, 66, 68.
- 226 Perroy, *Hundred Years War*, 238.
- 227 T.B. Pugh, *Henry V and the Southampton Plot* (London: Alan Sutton, 1988), 123.
- 228 Perroy, *Hundred Years War*, 236.
- 229 Allmand, *Henry V*, 79.
- 230 Christopher Hibbert, *Agincourt* (Philadelphia: Dufour Edition, 1964), 50.
- 231 Prestwich, *Armies and Warfare*, 118.
- 232 John, "Sir Thomas Erpingham", 106.
- 233 Rosemary Hawley-Jarman, *St. Crispin's Day: the Glory of Agincourt* (Boston: Little, Brown,  
1979), 97.
- 234 R. Ernest Dupuy and Trevor N. Dupuy, *The Harper Encyclopedia of Military History* fourth ed.  
(New York: Harper Collins, 1993), 445.
- 235 Hawley-Jarman, *St. Crispin's Day*, 108. John, "Sir Thomas Erpingham", 106.
- 236 Hingeston, *Chronicle of John Capgrave*, 310.
- 237 Allmand, *Henry V*, 83.
- 238 *Ibid.*, 84.
- 239 *Ibid.*, 85-86. Hibbert, *Agincourt*, 94.
- 240 Allmand, *Henry V*, 87.
- 241 Thomas Johnes, trans., *The Chronicles of Enguerrand de Monstrelet* (London: Henry G. Bohn,  
1853, 340.
- 242 *Ibid.*, 91-92. Hawley-Jarman, *St. Crispin's Day*, 158-160.
- 243 William Hardy and Edward Hardy, *A Collection of the Chronicles and Ancient Histories of Great  
Britain, now called England by John de Wavrin* (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1887), 210.
- 244 Sir Thomas Erpingham's use of the word "nestroque" is recorded in eyewitness accounts by  
Monstrelet (p. 341) and Wavrin (p. 210).
- 245 Allmand, *Henry V*, 94-95. Hawley-Jarman, *St. Crispin's Day*, 170. Hibbert, *Agincourt*, 150.
- 246 Kenyon, *Dictionary of British History*, 344.
- 247 "Bill to the Exchequer for Soldiers' Pay", a facsimile published as part of *The Battle of Agincourt*  
(Jackdaw Publications: London, n.n.), Jackdaw Number 32.
- 248 Pollard, "Sir Thomas Erpingham", *DNB* Supplement, 615. Frank Taylor, and John Roskell, eds.,  
*Gesta Henrici Quinti* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), 171.
- 249 Pollard, "Sir Thomas Erpingham", *DNB* Supplement, 615. E.W. Tristram, *The Erpingham Gate*  
(Norwich: Friends of the Cathedral Church of Norwich Ninth Annual Report, 1938), 40. *Eastern Daily  
Press* (Norwich), April 1987, no page number given.
- 250 Pollard, "Sir Thomas Erpingham", *DNB* Supplement, 615. Sir Thomas' first wife Joan Clopton  
died in 1409. He married Joan Walton shortly thereafter—the date of their union is apparently  
unknown. The *DNB* does not give it, nor does the timeline for the Erpingham Symposium. His second  
wife died in 1424.

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- <sup>251</sup> They were: Henry, Prince of Wales, Duke of Cornwall, and Earl of Chester in 1399; the king's second son Thomas was made Duke of Clarence and Earl of Aumale in 1412; Henry's youngest half-brother, Sir Thomas Beaufort, was made Earl of Dorset in 1412. K.B. McFarlane, Lancastrian Kings and Lollard Knights. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), 60.
- <sup>252</sup> Shaw, The Knights of England, 8. The other people who received the Garter from Henry were members of the royal family, peers, or foreign dignitaries. *Ibid.*, 10. Ironically, Phelip married the daughter of a peer and became fifth Baron Bardolf upon the death of his father-in-law in 1437. Sir William died in 1441.
- <sup>253</sup> Eastern Daily Press, no page number given.

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Post Mortem records of inquests held on the death of any tenant of the king; maintained so the king would know what rights of escheat, wardship, and perquisites were due him
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